UNDER ORDERS

THE STORY OF A YOUNG REPORTER

BY

KIRK MUNROE

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"ANY THING GOING ON TO-NIGHT?" VAN CLEEF ASKED THE POLICE SERGEANT. (*Page* 44.)

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THE STORY OF A YOUNG REPORTER

BY

KIRK MUNROE

AUTHOR OF "THE FLAMINGO FEATHER," "DERRICK STERLING," "DORYMATES," "CAMPMATES," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

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by
KIRK MUNROE

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TO JOHN BOGART

FOR MANY YEARS CITY EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK "SUN"

who, more than any other, helped me to obtain a literary foothold, whose honesty of purpose, strict sense of justice, and unswerving fidelity to duty uplifted him as an example of the ideal city editor, the dedication of this story of newspaper life is offered as a tribute of gratitude and affection by

THE AUTHOR

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UNDER ORDERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE CREW RESIGNS.

"THE situation certainly looks desperate, Anna," said Mr. Manning, with a deep sigh, as he turned wearily on his couch and reached out a thin white hand that was immediately clasped between the plump ones of his cheery-faced wife. Her face did not look so very cheery just at this moment, however, for lines of anxiety were wrinkling her forehead and her eyes were full of tears. Then, too, she was thinking so hard that her mouth was all puckered up.

"Yes, it does look a little desperate," she admitted; "but, bless you! it has looked desperate plenty of times before, and we have always come out all right somehow. God has been too good to us so far to desert us now, and I, for one, am willing to trust him to the end."

"Well, dear," answered her husband, "if you are, I ought to be, for the heaviest part of the burden must fall on you."

The Mannings lived in a pleasant, old-fashioned New Jersey village a few miles out of New York, and had, until recently, been in the most comfortable circumstances. Mr. Manning was the manager of a large manufacturing business and received a handsome salary, from which he should have laid by a snug sum against a "rainy day." He knew it was his duty to do this; but each year brought some new expense that seemed as if it ought to be met, and each year he said to himself:

"Well, I can't do any thing about it this time, that 's certain; but next year I must surely begin to lay something aside."

So year after year passed, until finally, when Myles Manning, the only son of the family, was ready to enter college, the annual expenses were found to be in excess of the handsome annual income, and nothing had been saved.

Alarmed at this state of affairs, and not prepared just then to retrench or practise an economy that would make them seem poor in the eyes of their

neighbors, Mr. Manning mortgaged their beautiful home. His wife at first refused to sign the necessary papers, but was at last persuaded into doing so.

It was only to raise enough money to see Myles properly through college. Then he would go into business and soon be in a position to help them, said Mr. Manning. He also said there was nothing in the world like college for a young man. Besides the education that it gave him, he made friends in college that were friends for life and always ready to help one another. Every thing depended, though, upon the set he got into. It must be the very best in the college, to be worth any thing at all. To keep up with that set in X—— College would cost something, and unless they mortgaged the place he really did not see how he was to raise the necessary money. They surely could not do less for their only son than to send him handsomely through college, and, after all, it would in the end prove one of the very best investments they could make.

So Mrs. Manning was persuaded, the mortgage was signed, and Myles went to X—— College. There, on account of his good looks, his generous disposition, his unfailing good-nature, and his ap-

parent command of ready money, he speedily became the most popular man of his class, and a leader in its "very best set," by which was meant the wealthiest and most extravagant lot of young fellows in it.

At the time this story opens he had nearly finished his third year of college life, and was looking forward with joyful anticipations to being soon that proudest, and, in his own estimation, most important of mortals—a senior. He was captain of the university crew, which was in steady training for the great annual race with the Z—— College crew at New London. He was also the best all-around athlete of his college. This, according to Ben Watkins, who had been his rival for the captaincy of the crew, and was almost the only fellow in his class who disliked Myles, was not surprising. He said that Manning did nothing else besides row and practise in the gymnasium. This was not true; for, although Myles did not rank very high at examinations, he still studied enough to enable him to pass with a fair average of marks. He had, moreover, determined upon a career which it seemed to him would not require a very profound scholarship. It was that of a politician; and he felt quite sure that

the influence of his own father, or that of some of his gay young college friends, would secure him some snug political position as soon as he was graduated.

Thus far, therefore, life had gone easily and prosperously with this light-hearted young fellow, and its future looked bright before him. He knew nothing of its ruder aspects—of its despair, its hunger, and its poverty. There were those who said of him that, while he was a good fair-weather sailor, he was not of the stuff to face, and do brave battle with, the storms of adversity, should they ever overtake him.

Now, just such a storm had overtaken Myles Manning, and he was to be tried. Nearly a year before a trouble of the eyes with which Mr. Manning was afflicted had suddenly resulted in total blindness. It was at first supposed to be only temporary, but as time wore on, and one painful operation after another failed to afford relief, hope began to yield to despair, and his career of usefulness seemed ended. Thus far his salary had been continued, and the affairs of the Manning family had gone on much as usual. At last there came a letter in which, while regretting the necessity, the president of the company that had em-

ployed Mr. Manning informed him that, as there was no present prospect that he would be able to resume his duties, the payment of his salary must cease from that date.

As Mrs. Manning finished reading this politely cruel letter to her husband she tried to speak cheerfully of it, and to find some gleam of hope in their situation. In her heart, however, she was compelled to admit that it was indeed desperate, and that she did not know which way to turn.

It was Saturday, and Kate Manning, the only daughter of the family, and a year younger than Myles, was home from Vassar, the summer vacation at which was already begun. The evening before, she and her mother planned a trip to a noted sea-side resort, at which they hoped Mr. Manning might be benefited, and where Kate, who was as fond of society as her brother, and in her way quite as popular as he, anticipated a delightful time. Myles had written that he expected an invitation to go on a yachting trip with Bert Smedley, one of the wealthiest of his classmates. Thus he too might be looked for at the same famous resort. He was to come home for Sunday to talk over plans for the summer.

Myles was never in better spirits, nor more full of enthusiasm over what he was doing, and about to do, than when he reached home that Saturday evening. After he had kissed his mother and sister, and been warned by them not to be boisterous, as his father was sleeping, they could do nothing for some time but sit and listen to his glowing accounts of college life and the joys of which it held so many for him.

At last he noticed their mood, and, stopping short in the middle of a glowing description of his crew and the splendid work it was doing, he asked:

"But what ails you two? You are as mum as oysters."

Then the mother crossed over to the sofa on which he sat, and, taking one of his hands in hers, said:

"My poor dear boy! It is so good to see you bright and happy that we had n't the heart to interrupt you with our sorrows."

"Sorrows!" exclaimed Myles, in a bewildered tone. "What do you mean, mother? Is any one dead? or is father worse?"

Then they told him the whole story; of the letter that had come that day, of the mortgage, with its ever accumulating load of interest, and

of the desperate financial condition of the family generally.

When the sad tale was ended the boy sat for a moment as motionless as though stunned. Then in a husky voice he asked:

"Is that all, mother?"

"No, dear, it is not," answered the brave little woman. "Kate and I have been looking at the situation in every possible light this afternoon, and have finally decided upon a plan in which we want your help. It is to rent this house furnished, and with every thing belonging to it, except the gardener's cottage. Into that we will move, and there we can manage to live very comfortably. Of course all the servants will be dismissed, and Kate is going to give up Vassar in order to stay at home and help me with the housework. In this way we hope to be able to pay the interest on the mortgage until there is a good chance to sell the property, when we shall be relieved of that burden. You have but one more year of college. By practising the closest economy all around—and this is where you can help us,—we think we can get you through with that. Then you will find some business and aid in supporting the

family. Thus we shall have only one year of real hard times, and that will soon be over with."

"Mother!" exclaimed the boy, giving a squeeze to the soft little hand clasped in his big brown ones; "you are the very best and bravest woman in the world. And, Kate, you are a dear, splendid girl. But do you suppose for one minute that I am going to let you two do all this for me and do nothing for myself? No, sir-e-e! If Kate must give up her college, in which I know she is doing a thousand times better than I am in mine, why, I shall do the same. I shall do it on Monday too. College is n't worth half so much in this world as home is, and where there is going to be a fight to keep that, I 'm going to be one of the fighters. Now don't say a word against it; I know the right thing to do, and I 'm going to do it."

Nothing they could say served to alter his determination in the slightest. He only added to his arguments that he was not giving up so very much after all, for it would n't be much fun to stay in college after he was no longer able to hold up his end. Into his mind came also unpleasant memories of a few little bills that even his generous allowance had

not been sufficient to meet; but of these he said nothing. He felt that they were his private burden and must be borne alone.

In spite of their remonstrances against his decision to leave college, both Mrs. Manning and Kate were greatly cheered by his manly resolution and brave words. As they listened to them their hearts grew many degrees lighter than they had been before his arrival.

When the boy told his father of his plans, the next day, Mr. Manning heartily approved of them. He only asked his son what steps he proposed to take to get into business.

"My influence might be sufficient to secure you some sort of a position with the M—— Company," he added, naming the one for which he had acted as manager.

"No, sir!" exclaimed Myles. "Any thing rather than that. I 'd sell papers on the street sooner than work under the man who wrote you that letter. Don't you worry, sir. I 'll find a place quick enough. There are lots of fellows in my class who are the sons of business men, and who would be glad to give me notes to their fathers.

Some of them are sure to take me in and give me a start."

The father sighed as he thought of the difference between friends in prosperity and friends in adversity; but he would not say any thing to dampen his boy's ardor.

"Let him work out his own salvation," said the blind man to his wife. "The harder the fight the more highly will he prize the victory when it is won, as I am certain it will be sooner or later. I am afraid, though, that it will be a long time before he is able to afford you any real assistance. If he supports himself for the first year or two he will be doing unusually well."

When Myles and his sister went to church together that Sunday morning many an admiring glance was cast at the stalwart young captain of the X—— College "Varsity" crew, and more than one pretty girl privately decided to wear X—— colors on the day of the great race.

On Monday, when his mother and Kate kissed him good-bye, tears stood in their eyes, and the former said:

"Oh, Myles, think again, and seriously before you

take this step. We can manage somehow to keep you in college for one little year more; I know we can."

"Of course you could, mother. You could do any thing that you set out to do, only I won't be kept," answered the boy, bravely. "The next thing you hear of me will be that I am a junior partner in some Wall Street concern; see if I am not."

The first person Myles met upon entering the college-grounds was Bert Smedley, who held out a paper to him, saying:

"You are just the one I was looking for, Manning. We have got to raise a hundred or two more to see you fellows through at New London, and our set has undertaken to do it. Here 's the subscription paper, and I would n't let a fellow sign it until I 'd got your name to head the list. So, now, give us something handsome as a starter."

Myles' heart sank at these words, and there was a choking sensation in his throat as he answered:

"There 's no use coming to me, Bert, I can't give a cent. You see, my father has got into trouble, and I 've got to leave college and go to work to help him out of it. If you will only speak a word for me

to your father, though, and ask if he can't find me some sort of a berth in his business, whatever that is, for I don't think I ever heard you say, I 'll be ever so much obliged to you, and will do as much and more for you if ever I have a chance."

"But you are captain of the crew!" gasped Smedley, bewildered by this sudden turn of affairs.

"No, I 'm not, now," answered Myles. "My resignation is already written and sent in. It was hard enough to give it up, you 'd better believe; but it had to be done—and business before pleasure, you know. You 'll speak a good word for me, old man, won't you?"

"I 'll see," replied the other. Then adding, "Excuse me a moment; there 's Watkins, and I must have his name," he hurried away, anxious to be the first to communicate the astounding intelligence he had just learned to Myles' most prominent rival.

The news flew fast, and Myles had hardly begun to dismantle his room of its many pretty bits of bric-a-brac, preparatory to packing up his belongings, before it was filled with a throng of fellows anxious to hear from his own lips the truth of the startling rumor.

"It 's a shame!" cried one.

"It will break up the crew!" exclaimed another.

"We might as well give the race to Z—— and be done with it."

But their thoughts seemed to be mostly of their own disappointment. Poor Myles, almost stunned by the clamor about him, could hardly hear the words of pity for himself, and sympathy with his misfortune, that were uttered here and there. It seemed to him that they cared nothing for him or his troubles, but thought only of what a loss he would be to the crew. Thus thinking he could not bring himself to ask their help in securing employment, as he had intended; and, though they were the fellows of his "set," upon whom he depended for aid, he let one after another of them leave the room without broaching the subject. At length the room was cleared and he was left alone.

Not quite alone though. A fellow named Van Cleef, whom Myles knew but slightly, and who was such a hard-working student as to be termed the class "dig," remained. As Myles turned and noticed him for the first time Van Cleef said:

"I 'm awfully sorry for you, Manning, and you

"IF YOU MUST GO TO WORK AT ONCE, WHY NOT TRY JOURNALISM?" (*Page* 15.)

are heartily welcome to any thing I can do to help you. If you must go to work at once why not try journalism? It is hard work, but it pays something from the very start, and that is more than can be said of almost any other business."

CHAPTER II.

TRYING TO BECOME A REPORTER.

"JOURNALISM!" exclaimed Myles Manning, in answer to Van Cleef's suggestion. "Why, I never thought of such a thing, and I don't know the first thing about it. To be sure," he added, reflectively, "I have helped edit the college *Oarsman*, and have written one or two little things that got published in our country weekly out home; but I don't suppose all that would help a fellow much in real journalism."

Here Myles looked up at his companion, hoping to hear him say that these things would go far toward securing him a position on one of the big dailies. But Van Cleef was too honest a fellow to raise false hopes in another, and he said:

"No; of course all that does n't amount to any thing. Everybody does more or less of that sort of thing nowadays, and it 's generally in

the poetry line; but there 's nothing practical in it."

Here Myles blushed consciously as he recalled the fact that most of his own efforts had been in the "poetry line"; but he said nothing.

"At any rate," continued Van Cleef, "you probably know as much of journalism as you do of Wall Street or any other business, and that is just nothing at all. You 'd have to begin at the very bottom, any way, and work up. Now, reporting is the only thing I know of that pays a fellow living wages from the very first, and that is the reason I mentioned it."

"Reporting!" echoed Myles, pausing in his packing and looking up with an expression of amazement. "You don't mean to say that your 'journalism' means being only a common reporter?"

Now, in Myles' set reporters were always spoken of, when mentioned at all, as a class of beings to be despised. He had come to regard them as a lot of very common fellows, who spent their time in prying into other people's business, who were to be avoided as much as possible, but who must be treated decently when met, for fear lest they might "write a fellow up," or put his name in the papers in some

unpleasant connection. When Van Cleef mentioned journalism his hearer's fancy at once sprang into the position of an editorial writer, a well-paid contributor of graceful verse or witty paragraphs, a critic, foreign correspondent, or something of that sort. But to be only a reporter! Why, the mere thought of such a thing was humiliating.

"Why not?" asked Van Cleef, in reply to Myles' question, and in surprise at his tone. "A first-class, well-trained, reporter is one of the brightest, smartest, and best-informed men in the city. He knows everybody worth knowing, and every thing that is happening or about to happen. He is as valuable to his paper as the editor-in-chief, and he often earns as much money. A reporter must of necessity learn something of every kind of business, and he meets with more chances than any other man to change his employment, if he wants to, for one that will pay him better.

"Look at the prominent politicians, railroad presidents, and others now occupying the most honorable positions of trust and power in this country, and see how many of them began life as reporters. Our present Secretary of State was once a reporter,

and a good one too. The President's private secretary, who is called the 'power behind the throne,' was a reporter. A late Secretary of the Treasury was once a reporter. I have a personal knowledge of six members of Congress who used to be reporters. All the foreign correspondents, who are really the men controlling the destinies of nations, are nothing more nor less than reporters. Stanley was a reporter, and so were hundreds more who are now world-famed. Oh, I tell you what, Manning, there is nothing to be ashamed of in being a reporter, though I will admit that most people seem to think there is.

"Of course, there are a lot of sneaks and worthless fellows in this business, as in every other, but they are decidedly in the minority, and are fast being weeded out. The newspapers now demand the very best men as reporters, and they are getting them, too. You have heard, of course, of the professorship of journalism at C—— College? Well, it was established by a man who, only a few years ago, was a reporter on one of the New York papers, and he is making a first-class thing of it. I am a sort of a reporter myself," he continued, laughing, "and the

minute I graduate from here I mean to become a full-fledged one."

"You a reporter!" cried Myles. "How can you be a reporter and a college man at the same time?"

"Easy enough, or rather by working hard and sacrificing some sleep," answered Van Cleef. "You see," he continued, in a slightly embarrassed tone, for he was not given to talking of himself or his own affairs, "I am not one of you wealthy fellows, but have had to hoe my own row ever since I was fifteen. When I came here to enter college I had to find something to do to support myself at the same time. After a lot of disappointments I was fortunate enough to obtain a night-station job on the *Phonograph*, and, though the pay is small, it is enough to keep me going."

"What do you mean by a 'night-station' job?" asked Myles, now greatly interested in what Van Cleef was saying.

"Why," laughed the other, "it means that I go at ten o'clock every evening to the police-station nearest Central Park, on either the east or the west side of the city, and walk from there down to the Battery. On the way I stop at every station and at the

hospitals to inquire for stray bits of news or interesting incidents. As the route lies through the very lowest and worst parts of town one is also apt to run across something or other of interest that even the police have not found out. I have to be all through and report at the office at sharp one o'clock."

"I should think that would be fun," said Myles; "and I should like mightily to take the trip with you some night."

"I should only be too glad of your company," returned the other, "and perhaps you would enjoy it for once. I can tell you though, it gets to be awfully monotonous after you have done it for a year or so, and I shall be happy enough to give it up for regular reporting when the time comes that I can do so."

"Are n't you in great danger, walking alone so late at night through the slums?" asked Myles.

"Oh, no—that is, not to speak of. A reporter, if he is known to be such, is generally safe enough wherever he goes, and I am pretty well known by this time along the entire line of my route."

"You carry a pistol, of course?"

"Indeed I do nothing so foolish," answered Van Cleef. "It would be certain to get me into trouble sooner or later. I only carry this badge, and it affords a better protection than all the pistols I could stuff into my pockets."

Here the speaker threw open his coat and displayed the silver badge of a deputy sheriff pinned to his vest.

"Yes, I have been regularly sworn in," he continued, in answer to Myles' inquiring glance, "and the sight of it acts like magic in quieting a crowd of toughs. It passes me through fire-lines, too, which is often a great convenience."

"What do you do in vacations?" asked Myles, with the curiosity of one exploring a new world of experience, the very existence of which he had not heretofore dreamed of.

"Do my station-work nights, and in the daytime read law or study English literature in the library," answered Van Cleef. "Once in a while the city editor offers me an excursion assignment. Then I take a day off from study and get paid for going into the country at the same time."

"An excursion assignment?" questioned Myles.

"Yes; every job on which a reporter is sent is called an 'assignment,' or, in some offices, a 'detail,' and if he is sent on a Chinese picnic, or down the bay with the newsboys, or up the Sound with the fat men, or on any other trip of that kind, it is an excursion assignment."

"Well, look here, Van Cleef, it seems to me that you are one of the most plucky fellows I ever met!" exclaimed Myles, extending a hand that the other grasped heartily, "and I am ashamed of myself not to have known you before."

"I don't know that that has been your fault so much as my own. I knew that I had no business with your set of fellows, so I have kept out of your way as much as possible," remarked the other, quietly.

"And a good thing for you that you have," cried Myles, bitterly, "for my opinion of that set of fellows is—well," he added, checking himself, "never mind now what it is. I have done with them, and they with me. The question of present interest is, do you think I could ever make a reporter: and, if so, can you tell me where to find a job at the business?"

By these questions it will be seen that our young man's ideas concerning business, and the business of reporting in particular, had undergone some very decided changes since he left home that morning.

"You are undoubtedly bright enough and smart enough," answered Van Cleef, "and I have no doubt that if you should stick to the business long enough, and accept its rough knocks as a desirable part of your training, you could readily become a first-class reporter. As for obtaining a job at it, that is quite another thing. The newspaper offices all over the country, and especially in New York, are besieged by young fellows who want to try their hand at reporting, but not one in a hundred of them is taken on. I 'll tell you, though, what we will do. The only paper on which I know anybody of influence is the *Phonograph*, and perhaps you would n't like it as well as some other. So you take a run by yourself among the offices of all the big dailies this afternoon. The little ones are not worth trying. Send your card in to the city editors, and apply for work. If you don't find any that suits you, meet me at the *Phonograph* office at five o'clock and I 'll introduce you to the city editor there. I don't say that my introduc-

tion will do any good. Probably it won't; but at any rate it will give you a chance to talk with him, and plead your own case. Afterward we will dine together somewhere, and then, if you choose, you can go with me on my round of stations."

"Good enough!" cried Myles; "that 's an immense plan, and we will carry it out to the letter. You won't mind if I say there are one or two papers that I 'd rather become connected with than with the *Phonograph*. That seem just a little more respectable and high-toned, don't you know."

"Oh, yes, I know," laughed Van Cleef, "and my feelings are not in the slightest ruffled by your prejudice, which is quite a popular one. I attribute it wholly to your ignorance, and know that you will outgrow it before you have been many days a reporter."

"And, by the way," said Myles, as the other was about to leave the room, "you must dine with me at the Oxygen to-night. It may be the last time I am ever able to take anybody there, you know."

"All right," answered Van Cleef. "Good-bye till this evening."

The sale, to a dealer in such things, of the furni-

ture, pictures, and costly but useless knick-knacks with which his room was crowded, enabled Myles to pay his debts and left him about ten dollars with which to make a start in the business world. It was after two o'clock when he completed his arrangements for leaving college. He was strongly tempted to go to the river and take a look at the crew in their practice spin; but "business before pleasure," the motto that he had already used once that day, flashed into his mind, and he resolutely turned his face toward down-town and the newspaper offices.

Arrived at the office of the paper which, for some unexplainable reason, he considered the most respectable of all, he naturally turned into the counting-room that was located on the ground floor and inquired for the city editor.

"Editorial rooms up-stairs," was the curt answer of a busy clerk, who did not even look up from the work upon which he was engaged.

When an elevator had lifted Myles to the very top of the tall building, he found himself in a small, bare room provided with two or three chairs, and a bench upon which two small boys were playing at jackstones. One of them, leaving his game and

stepping smartly up to Myles, asked what he wanted there.

"I want to see the city editor," was the answer.

"What 's your business with him?" asked the boy.

"None of your business what my business is, you impudent young rascal," answered Myles, angrily. "Go at once and tell the city editor that I wish to see him."

"And who are you, anyway?" demanded the boy, assuming an aggressive attitude, with arms akimbo and head cocked to one side. The other boy, whose interest was now aroused, came and stood beside his companion in a similar attitude, and they both gazed defiantly at the young man.

The situation was becoming ridiculous, and, to relieve himself from it as quickly as possible, Myles produced his card-case, thrust a card into the hand of the first boy, and said, in a tone of suppressed rage:

"Take that to the city editor this instant, you imp, and say that the gentleman wishes to see him on business, or I 'll throw you out of that window."

Somewhat frightened by Myles' tone the boy left the room muttering:

"A fine gentleman he is, ain't he! A-threatening of a chap not half his size."

In less than a minute he returned with a renewed stock of impudence. Offering the card back to Myles he said:

"The city editor says that he don't know you, and you 'll have to send word what your business is with him."

It was too humiliating. Myles could not confide to the grinning figures before him that he was seeking a reporter's position, and so, muttering some unintelligible words, he turned to leave. He had to wait several minutes for the elevator, and while he did so he could not help overhearing the jeering comments of the two young rascals upon himself. One of them said:

"He 's out of a job, that feller is, and he came here to offer hisself as boss editor."

"Naw, he did n't neither," drawled the other. "He ain't after no such common posish as that. What he wants is your place or mine. But he 's too young, and fresh, he is. He would n't suit. No, sir-e-e." And then the two little wretches exploded with laughter at their own wit.

Myles walked about the City Hall Park for some time before he could summon up sufficient courage for a second venture. When at last he found his way to another editorial waiting-room it was only to be informed that the city editor was out and would not be back until six o'clock.

A third attempt resulted in his being ushered into the presence of a brisk young man, apparently not much older than himself. This self-important individual listened impatiently while Myles hesitatingly made known his desires, and promptly answered:

"Very sorry, sir, but absolutely no vacancy in our staff. Five hundred applicants ahead of you. No chance at all. Good-day."

Thus dismissed Myles got out of the office somehow, though how he could not have told. His mind was filled with mortification, disappointment, and anger at everybody in general and himself in particular for being so foolish as to imagine that it was an easy thing to obtain a position as reporter on a great daily.

It was after the appointed hour before he was sufficiently calmed down to visit the office of the *Phonograph*, and he found Van Cleef anxiously awaiting him.

"Well," he said, questioningly, after he had passed Myles through a boy-guarded entrance into a large, brilliantly lighted room in which a number of young men sat at a long desk busily writing. "How have you got on?"

"Not at all," answered Myles, "and I don't believe I am ever likely to."

"Nonsense! You must n't be so easily discouraged. Come and let me introduce you to Mr. Haxall, our city editor. He is a far different kind of a man from any of the others, I can tell you."

Mr. Haxall was kindly polite, almost cordial in his manner, and listened attentively to Myles' brief explanation of his position and hopes. When it was finished he, too, was beginning to say, "I am very sorry, Mr. Manning, but we have already more men than we know what to do with," when Van Cleef said something to him in so low a tone that Myles did not catch what it was.

"Is that so?" said Mr. Haxall, reflectively, and looking at Myles with renewed interest. "It might be made very useful, that 's a fact. Well, I 'll strain a point and try him."

Then to Myles he said:

VAN CLEEF SAID SOMETHING TO THE CITY EDITOR IN A LOW TONE. (*Page* 30.)

"Still, we are always on the lookout for bright, steady young fellows who mean business. So if you want to come, and will report here at sharp eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, I will take you on trial till next Saturday and pay you at the rate of fifteen dollars per week."

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD GENTLEMAN OF THE OXYGEN.

POOR Myles had met with so many rebuffs and disappointments, and his own opinion of himself had been so decidedly lowered that afternoon, that he was fully prepared to have his offer of service refused by the city editor of the *Phonograph*. He was therefore not at all surprised when Mr. Haxall began in his kindly but unmistakable way to tell him that there was no vacancy. He had already made up his mind to give up trying for a reporter's position and make an effort in some other direction, when, to his amazement, he found himself accepted and ordered to report for duty the following day. It was incomprehensible. What had Van Cleef said to influence the city editor so remarkably?

There was no chance to ask just then, for Mr. Haxall had already resumed his reading of the evening papers, a great pile of which lay on his desk, and

Myles realized that the short interview, by which the whole course of his life was to be affected, was at an end. So he merely said: "Thank you, sir, I 'll be on hand," and turned to follow Van Cleef, who had already started toward the door.

The boy's mind was in a conflicting whirl of thoughts, and he was conscious of a decided sense of exaltation. He had actually got into business and was to receive a salary. To be sure, it was only promised for one week; but even in that short time he felt that he could prove so useful that the city editor would wonder how he had ever got along without him.

As they passed into the anteroom of the office Van Cleef introduced his companion to a Mr. Brown, a stout, middle-aged man, who occupied a dingy little den, in which he was busily writing by the light of a single gas-jet. Mr. Brown was affably condescending, was pleased to make Mr. Manning's acquaintance, and hoped he would like the office.

As they bade him good-evening and started downstairs Myles asked:

"Who is this Mr. Brown, Van? Is he one of the editors?"

"Bless you, no," laughed Van Cleef. "He is the janitor of the building."

"The janitor!" exclaimed Myles, with a slight tone of contempt in his voice. "Why, I thought he must be the managing editor at the very least. What on earth did you want to introduce me to the janitor for? I'm not in the habit of knowing such people."

"Oh, you are not, are n't you!" replied Van Cleef, a little scornfully. "Well, the sooner you form the habit the better you will get along as a reporter. It 's no use putting on airs, old man," he continued, more kindly. "A reporter has got to be on friendly terms with all sorts of men, from presidents to janitors, and a good deal lower in the social scale than that too. Besides, Brown is a mighty good fellow, as you will find out when you come to know him. He also occupies a position in which he can smooth your path or make you uncomfortable in many little ways, as he takes a notion. Why, for one thing, he has charge of all those rascals of office-boys, and they will treat you respectfully or the reverse according as they see that you are in Brown's good or bad graces. That seems a little thing, but you will find that it makes a great difference to your peace of

mind. Oh, yes, you must cultivate Brown by all means."

When they were seated in the elevated train on their way up-town Myles suddenly remembered his companion's mysterious communication to the city editor, and asked him what he had said to cause Mr. Haxall to alter his decision so completely.

"It was evident," he continued, "that he was about to give me a polite dismissal, but you whispered a word or two in his ear and he immediately engaged me. What was it? Did you tell him I was one of the principal stockholders in the paper?"

Van Cleef burst into a fit of laughter so uncontrollable that it was a full minute before he could answer. At last he said:

"No, indeed; I did n't tell him that you were a stockholder in the paper; for, in the first place, I didn't know that you were. In the second place, the stockholders are the bane of his existence, and worry him more than anybody else by forcing worthless fellows, who have some claim upon them, into his department. Oh, no, I was n't going to ruin your chances by representing you in any such unfavorable light as that."

"What did you tell him then?"

"Why, I simply mentioned that you owned a dress-suit."

For a moment Myles stared at his companion in speechless amazement. Finally he gasped out:

"A dress-suit! You told him that I owned a dress-suit! What in the name of common sense could that have to do with his taking me on as a reporter? Or are you only joking?"

"Not a bit of it," answered Van Cleef. "It honestly was the dress-suit, and nothing else, unless it was your manner and personal appearance that fixed the business for you. You see, there are lots of places to which a city editor wishes to send a reporter where only fellows in full evening dress are admitted. Now, most reporters are too poor to own dress-suits, or else they have so little use for such luxuries that they don't care to go to the expense. Thus it is often hard for the city editor to find a man for some important bit of work just on this account. He therefore keeps a list of all the reporters on the staff who own swallow-tails, and is mighty glad to add to it, especially if the proposed addition is evidently a gentleman. I saw that he was n't

going to give you a show, and just then it occurred to me to suggest the only special recommendation I could think of. But what makes you look so downcast? It worked all right, did n't it?"

"Oh, yes," answered Myles, whose self-esteem had just received the severest shock of the day by learning the secret of his recent success, which he had fondly imagined was owing to something far different. "Yes, it worked all right; but I 've always heard that clothes did not make the man, while here is proof positive that clothes can at least make a reporter. It is awfully humiliating, and the worst of it is that I have n't a dress-suit."

"Why, I have seen you wear it time and again?" exclaimed Van Cleef.

"Yes, but I found it necessary to raise a little ready money to-day," answered Myles, though he hated to make the admission; "so I sold it along with some other things I thought I should never need again to Johnny, the 'old-clo' man.'"

"You don't mean it!" cried Van Cleef. "Well, that is bad, and the only thing for you to do is to go to Johnny first thing in the morning and make him let you have it back."

"But I am afraid I have n't money enough to redeem it," said Myles, with a heightened color. In the set to which he had so recently belonged poverty was the thing most sneered at, and Myles had not yet learned that it was one of the last things to be ashamed of.

"Oh, I can make that all right," answered the other, cheerfully. "I have a few dollars put away against next year's term-bills, and you are more than welcome to them. Yes, indeed, you must take them," he added, earnestly, as he saw the shadow of a refusal in his companion's face. "We must get hold of that dress-suit again if it is a possible thing. It will really be doing me a favor besides; for while I have them I 'm always tempted to spend those dollars. If they are invested as a loan, though, I can't spend them, and I shall have the satisfaction of knowing they are safe."

Myles had tried, unsuccessfully, to borrow a small sum of money that morning from several of his wealthy classmates. Now, to have this generous offer made by one of the very poorest among them was so overwhelming that he hardly knew what to say. He hated to accept money from one who was so little

able to spare it. He also feared to hurt his friend's feelings by refusing, and he realized the importance of recovering that dress-suit. These thoughts flashed through his mind in an instant, and then he did exactly the right thing, by heartily thanking Van Cleef for his kind offer and accepting it.

The "Oxygen" was a club occupying a small but well appointed club-house, supported by one of the college Greek-letter fraternities of which Myles had recently been made a member. He was very proud of belonging to this, his first club, but he foresaw that, with his altered circumstances, it was a luxury that he could no longer afford. He had therefore made up his mind to hand in his resignation that very evening.

After a particularly nice little dinner, for Myles, like many another, was inclined to be very generous in the expenditure of his last dollar, and after he had written a line to his mother, the friends sat in the reading-room. Here they talked in low tones of their future plans and of their college life, which, to Myles, already seemed to belong to the dim past. The only other occupant of the room was a small, rather insignificant looking old gentleman, who was

carelessly glancing over some papers at a table near them. Finally Van Cleef asked to be excused for a short time, as he had an errand that would take him a few blocks from there, and which must be done that evening.

He had hardly left when the old gentleman looked up from his papers and said to Myles:

"I beg your pardon, but are you not Mr. Manning, captain of the X—— College 'Varsity crew?"

"Yes, sir," answered Myles, "I am—that is, I was—I mean my name is Manning, and I was until this morning captain of the crew; but I have resigned."

"Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it," replied the old gentleman, with an air of interest. "Would you mind telling me why you found it necessary to do so? I am an old X—— College man myself, and take a great interest in all its athletic sports, especially its boating. I have been much pleased with the performance thus far of this year's crew under your captaincy, and regret seriously that you feel obliged to give it up."

Encouraged by the old gentleman's friendly manner, and very grateful for his sympathy and kindly interest in himself, Myles readily answered his ques-

tions, and within a few minutes was surprised to find how freely he was talking to this stranger. He could not have told how it was brought about, but before their conversation ended he had confided to the other all his trials, plans, and hopes, including the facts that he was on the morrow to begin life as a reporter on the *Phonograph*, and that he intended resigning from the Oxygen that evening.

When Myles realized that he was becoming almost too confidential, and checked himself as he was about to relate the dress-suit incident, the old gentleman said:

"I have been greatly interested in all this, and now, to show that I appreciate the confidence you have reposed in me, I am going to ask a favor of you."

"Which I shall be only too happy to grant, sir, provided it lies within my power," answered Myles, who had taken a great fancy to the old gentleman.

"It is that you will not resign from the Oxygen."

"But I must, sir, much as I hate to."

"Not necessarily," replied the other. "You know that at the business meetings of the club all members are allowed to vote by proxy if they are unable to be personally present. Now I am nearly always

compelled to be absent from these meetings. In fact, I rarely find time to visit the club at all; but, as one of its founders, I am most anxious for its success, and desirous of still having a voice in the conduct of its affairs. This I can only do by appointing a regular proxy, and if you will kindly consent to act as such for me I will gladly pay your dues to the club, and shall still consider myself under an obligation to you."

The temptation to accept this friendly proposal was so great that Myles only protested feebly against it. His faint objections were quickly overruled by the old gentleman, who had no sooner gained the other's consent to remain in the club and act as his proxy than he looked at his watch and, exclaiming, "Bless me, it is later than I thought!" bade Myles a cordial good-night and hurried away.

"What did you say his name was?" asked Van Cleef, after he had returned and listened to Myles' enthusiastic description of his new friend and account of their interview.

"His name?" repeated Myles, hesitatingly, "why, I don't believe he mentioned it. I 'll go and ask the door-tender."

But the door-tender had just been relieved and gone home, while the boy who acted in his place of course knew nothing of who had come or gone before he went on duty.

"Well, that is good," laughed Van Cleef, when Myles returned and, with a crestfallen air, announced that he could not discover the name of the person for whom he had just consented to act as proxy. "The old gentleman has shown himself to be a better reporter, or detective, which is much the same thing, than you, Manning. He has gained a full knowledge of you and your plans, while you have learned absolutely nothing about him. He may be an impostor, for all you know."

"Not much he is n't," answered Myles, somewhat indignantly; "I 'd trust his face for all that he claimed, and a good deal more beside. Anyhow he is a *Psi Delt*, for he had the grip."

"Oh, well," said Van Cleef, good-naturedly, seeing that his companion was a little provoked at being thought easily imposed upon, "I dare say it 's all right, and you 'll hear from him in some way or other."

As the friends thus talked they were walking

rapidly toward the first of the many police-stations that Van Cleef was obliged to visit every night, for it wanted but a few minutes of ten o'clock.

The plain brick building situated in the middle of a block and used as a police-station could be distinguished from the houses on either side of it at a long distance up or down the street by the two green lights on the edge of the sidewalk in front of it. Reaching it, the reporters ran up a short flight of steps, and entered a big square room, the silence of which was only broken by the ticking of a telegraph instrument in one corner. The room was brightly lighted and scrupulously clean. An officer in a sort of undress uniform, who is known as a "door-man," whose business it is to take care of the station-house and of the cells beneath it, saluted Van Cleef as he entered. Returning the salute, the reporter stepped up to a stout railing that ran the whole length of the room at one side, and, addressing another officer, who sat at a big desk writing in an immense book, said :

"Good-evening, sergeant."

"Good-evening, Mr. Van Cleef."

"Any thing going on to-night?"

"Nothing more than ordinary."

"You don't mind my looking at the blotter?"

"Certainly not."

"Hello! what 's this drowning case?" inquired Van Cleef, as he ran his eye down a page of the big book, on which were recorded the arrests or other important incidents reported by the officers of that station during the day.

"That? Oh, that 's nothing particular. It happened a couple of hours ago, and your head-quarters man has got all there is of it long before this."

Van Cleef asked no further questions, but, making a few notes of the case, he bade the sergeant good-night, and he and Myles left the station.

As they gained the street Van Cleef said:

"Head-quarters may or may not have got hold of that case, and it may not amount to any thing anyway, but I think it 's worth looking up. So if you don't mind going a bit out of our way, we will see what we can find out about it."

"What do you mean by head-quarters?" asked Myles.

"Why, all the large papers keep a man at the Police Head-quarters on Mulberry Street day and

night, and he telegraphs all important police news from there to them," answered Van Cleef.

Away over to Tenth Avenue they went. There they hunted some time before they found the right number. Then through a narrow, intensely dark and vile-smelling alley, across a dirty court, and into a tall back tenement swarming with human beings, up flight after flight of filthy stairways they climbed to the very top of the house before they reached the room of which they were in search. Van Cleef knocked at the closed door, but, receiving no answer, he pushed it open and they entered.

A single flaring candle dimly lighted the scene. The room was so bare that a rude bedstead, a ruder table, two chairs, and a rusty stove constituted all its furniture. On the bed, still in its wet clothing, lay the body of the drowned man. It was little more than a skeleton, and the cheeks were white and hollow. Beside the bed, with her face buried in her hands, knelt a woman moaning, while from a corner two wretched children, huddled together on a pile of rags, stared at the visitors with big, frightened eyes.

As Van Cleef touched the kneeling woman on the

shoulder and spoke to her, she ceased her moaning and lifted the most pitiful, haggard, and altogether hopeless face Myles Manning thought he had ever seen.

"Go away!" she cried, "and leave me alone to die with him! O Jim, my Jim! why could n't you take me with you? Why did you leave me, Jim—Jim—my Jim, the best husband that ever a woman had?" Then she again buried her face, and again began her heart-rending moaning.

It was a long time before Van Cleef, using infinite patience, tact, and soothing words could learn her story. It was an old one of a husband and father broken down in health, thrown out of employment, too proud to seek public charity, and finally plunging into the river to escape the piteous cries of his starving little ones. He had gone out that evening to seek food, saying that he would either bring it or never come back alive. He knew that if he were dead his family would stand a better chance of being cared for than while he was living.

As Myles and Van Cleef left this place of sorrow and suffering, the latter slipped a dollar into the woman's hand and promised further aid on the morrow. Myles, poor fellow, was so affected by

what he saw that he would have given her his sole bit of wealth—a five-dollar bill,—but his companion restrained him.

They had to hurry through with the half-dozen police-stations and two hospitals remaining on their route to make up for lost time.

Trinity bells were chiming a quarter to one o'clock as they reached the *Phonograph* office. The editorial rooms were ablaze with electric lights. Reporters and messenger-boys were dashing in and out. Men in their shirt-sleeves were writing or editing copy at the long desks. The whole scene was the one of breathless haste and well ordered confusion that always immediately precedes the going to press of a great daily.

Van Cleef made his report to the night city editor, and was ordered to write out his story in full. While he was doing this, Myles sat and watched him, wondering if he could possibly compose a readable description of what they had just seen amid such surroundings. At last Van Cleef finished, handed in his copy, and at half-past two o'clock the two weary fellows turned into bed, Myles sharing his companion's humble lodgings for the night.

CHAPTER IV.

BEGINNING A NEW LIFE.

VAN CLEEF seemed to fall asleep at once, but the novel train of thought whirling through Myles' brain rendered it impossible for him to follow this example immediately. As he lay, with wide-open eyes, recalling the incidents of the day it seemed incredible that he had seen, and learned, and gone through with what he had, all within the space of a few hours. Could it be that he had left home prepared to give up his college life only that morning? He must send them a long letter, for they would be so anxious to hear every thing that had happened to him. As he said this to himself his thoughts merged into dreams so gradually that he had no knowledge of where the one ended and the other began.

"Wake up, old man, wake up! Here it is nine o'clock Tuesday morning and the week's work yet to be done."

It was Van Cleef's voice, and as Myles sprang to a sitting posture and rubbed his eyes he saw his friend standing beside the bed fully dressed and looking as bright as if sleep were something for which he had no need.

"Yes," he said, in answer to Myles' inquiring glance, "I have been up and out for an hour, and I 'm sorry to say that I have bad news for you."

Myles' expression at once became anxious. Had the city editor sent word that he had changed his mind and did not want him after all?

"You see," continued Van Cleef, "I was worried about that dress-suit business. So I just slipped out without waking you, and went up to old Johnnie's to get it; but I was too late. He sold it last evening; and so—there we are!"

"Then I suppose there is no use of my going down to the *Phonograph* office again," said Myles, trying to speak with a cheerfulness that he did not feel.

"No use!" exclaimed the other. "Why, of course there is. You are under orders, you know, and must at least report for duty, whether you are wanted or not. The only thing is that you will have to tell Mr. Haxall."

"Yes, I suppose I must," answered Myles, soberly, as he began to dress, "and then he will probably tell me that a dress-suit, and not Myles Manning, was what he engaged, and that without it he has no use for its late owner. I suppose I can stand it, though, as well as another, but it will be a disappointment."

"Of course it will if it comes," replied Van Cleef, cheerfully; "but I do not believe it will. At any rate there is no use making matters worse by worrying in advance; so let 's brace up and go out for breakfast. I 'm as hungry as a boot-black. By the way, I spoke to my landlady this morning and find that she has a vacant hall-bedroom that you can have for three dollars a week if you want it. It 's small, but it 's clean and airy, and this is a most respectable neighborhood. Above all, it is cheap, which is the main thing with me, and also, I take it, with you just at present."

"Of course it is," answered Myles, "and I shall be only to glad to be in the same house with you. You are almost the only friend I own now; at any rate, you are the most valuable one."

As he spoke Myles found himself wondering if this valued friend could be the same class "dig"

with whom he had been barely on speaking terms only the morning before.

At a small but tidy restaurant near by, they obtained an excellent breakfast of coffee, rolls, and boiled eggs, for twenty-five cents apiece. Van Cleef apologized for this unusual extravagance, saying that he generally breakfasted on coffee and rolls alone for fifteen cents, but that this was an occasion.

In the restaurant they found copies of the morning papers, and Myles, paying no attention to those that he had been in the habit of reading, eagerly seized the *Phonograph*. Yes, there it was; a half-column account of the scene they had witnessed the night before in the Tenth Avenue tenement-house. How interesting it was! How well expressed, and what a pathetic picture it presented of that room and its occupants! As Myles finished reading the story he turned to his companion with honest admiration.

"You are a regular out-and-out genius, Van!" he exclaimed. "If I could write a story like that and get it printed I 'd be too proud to speak to common folks, and I 'd expect to have my salary raised to the top notch at once."

"Well, I fancy you 'd have to take it out in expecting, then," laughed the other. "That may be a fair sort of a story, and I won't say that it is n't, but at the same time I doubt if any one besides yourself gives it a second thought. You would n't if you 'd been in the office a week or two and studied the other fellows' work. Why, the very brightest men in the city are on the *Phonograph*, as you will soon discover. As for a raise of salary—well, you will have to write many and many a story better than this little screed of mine before that happy event takes place."

"Then mine will continue to be fifteen per week for the rest of my natural life, or, rather, for as long as they will let me hang on down there, I 'm afraid," sighed Myles.

"Not a bit of it, my dear fellow. A year from now you will be 'way up, probably on space, and looking back with infinite pity upon yourself as a salary man at fifteen dollars a week. There is just one bit of advice, though, that, if you will let me, I should like ever so much to give you as a starter. It is, never refuse an assignment. No matter how hard or distasteful or insignificant the job promises to be,

take it without a word and go through with it to the best of your ability without a murmur. Also, never hesitate to take hold of any piece of work offered you for fear you may not be capable of performing it. A reporter must be capable of any thing and must have the fullest confidence in himself. If the city editor says some fine morning, 'Mr. Manning, the *Phonograph* wishes to locate the North Pole; will you be kind enough to go and discover it?' you must answer, 'Certainly, sir,' and set off at once. Such an undertaking might prove expensive; but that is the city editor's lookout, not yours. You are under orders exactly as though you were in the army, and your responsibility ends with obeying them to the letter. Now I must be off to recitation and you must be getting down-town. So good-bye, and good-luck to you. I shall probably see you again at the office this evening."

All the way down-town the wheels of the elevated train seemed to rattle out, "Under orders, under orders," and Myles could think of nothing else.

"How many people are 'under orders!'" he said to himself as he reflected that most of the best work

of the world was accomplished by those who obeyed orders. Thus thinking he finally decided that he was proud of being "under orders," and that if he could make a name in no other way he would at least gain a reputation for strict obedience to them. In reaching this conclusion he took a most important forward step, for in learning to obey orders one also learns how to give them.

Myles reached the office a few minutes before eleven o'clock, and, walking boldly past the boys who guarded its entrance, bowing to, and receiving a pleasant "good-morning" from, Mr. Brown as he did so, he entered the city-room, as that portion of the editorial offices devoted to the use of reporters and news editors is called.

The great room was as clean, neat, and fresh as the office-boys, who had been at work upon it for the past hour, could make it. Every desk and chair was in its place, and not a scrap of paper littered the newly swept floor. In the corner farthest from the entrance, beside a large open window that overlooked the busy scene of Park Row, City Hall Park, and Broadway beyond it, sat the city editor before a handsome flat-topped desk. Other single desks

occupied favorable positions beside other windows, but their chairs were vacant at this early hour. Down the middle of the floor ran two parallel rows of double desks, each containing a locked drawer and each supplied with pens, ink, writing- and blotting-paper. These were for the reporters. At one side was a long reading-shelf, beneath which hung files of all the city papers. At the back of the room was a row of lockers like those in a gymnasium, in which were kept overcoats, hats, umbrellas, and other such articles belonging to the occupants of the office.

A dozen or more bright-looking, well-dressed young men sat or stood about the room chatting, reading the morning papers, or holding short consultations with the city editor. While talking with them he hardly looked up from the paper that he was glancing over with practised eyes, and occasionally clipping a paragraph from with a pair of long, slim shears. He took these papers from a pile lying on his desk that contained a copy of every morning daily published in New York, Brooklyn, or Jersey City. The little slips that he cut from them were laid by themselves at one end of his desk.

It was a pleasant room. Its very air was inspiring, and Myles wished he were sure of being permanently established as one of its occupants. But the thought of the confession he had to make, and of its probable results, weighed heavily on his mind. He was impatient to have it over with and to know the worst at once.

Walking straight up to the city editor's desk he said:

"Good-morning, Mr. Haxall. I——"

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Manning. Glad to see you so promptly on hand. If you will find a seat I 'll have time to talk with you in a few minutes."

So Myles found a seat on a window-sill and amused himself by watching what was going on around him. He noticed that as each reporter entered the room he walked directly to a slate, that hung on the wall near the door, and read carefully a list of names written on it. He afterward found that this was a list of those for whom mail matter had come addressed to the office. Having received his letters from Mr. Brown, and taken one or more copies of the morning *Phonograph* from a pile on the janitor's desk, each reporter occupied himself as

he chose until summoned by Mr. Haxall and given an assignment.

Upon accepting this, his name and the nature of the duty he was about to undertake were entered on the page, for that day, of a large blank-book known as the "assignment book." Myles also noticed that nearly every assignment was given in the form of one of the slips clipped from other papers by the city editor. The reporter generally walked slowly away, reading this slip, and studying the problem thus presented to him, as he went. When, some days afterward, Myles had a look at this famous assignment book he found that each of its pages was dated, and that in it clippings, referring to future events, were entered under their respective dates.

The young reporter sat so near the city editor's desk that he could catch fragments of the conversation between Mr. Haxall and those whom he was dispatching to all parts of the city, its suburbs, and apparently to remote corners of the country as well. He overheard one young man ordered to take a journey that would certainly occupy days and possibly weeks. Myles watched this reporter with

curious eyes as, after taking a small hand-bag from his locker, he left the office as carelessly as though his journey was only to be across the Brooklyn Bridge instead of into a wilderness a thousand miles away, as it really was.

Myles envied this reporter, as he also did another who was sent out to the very New Jersey village in which his own home was located. How he did wish he might have that assignment.

At length when the others had been sent away on their respective errands Mr. Haxall called his name, and he stepped forward with a quickly-beating heart to receive his first assignment.

"I only wanted to know your city address, Mr. Manning," said the city editor, looking up with a pleasant smile. "We find it necessary to know where our reporters live, so that in an emergency they may be reached out of office-hours."

When Myles had given the required address he still remained standing before the desk. Noticing this Mr. Haxall again looked up and said:

"Is there any thing else?"

"Yes, sir," answered Myles, hesitating and becoming very red in the face, like a school-boy before

his master, "I wanted to say that I have n't any dress-suit."

"Have n't what?" asked the city editor, in amazement.

"A dress-suit."

"Have n't a dress-suit?" repeated Mr. Haxall, with a perplexed air, and regarding Myles as though he feared for his mental condition. "Well, what of it?"

"Why, I thought the reason you engaged me was because I owned a dress-suit. Mr. Van Cleef told me so."

"Oh," laughed the city editor, tilting back in his chair for the fuller enjoyment of his merriment. "That 's a good one! And now it seems that you don't own a dress-suit, after all. Well, I am sorry; but never mind, we will try to get along without it, and I will find something for you to do directly that won't require one."

So the confession was made and Myles had not lost his place, after all. He resumed his seat with a light heart and for another hour patiently awaited orders. In the meantime several men came in, wrote out their reports, handed them to the city editor, and

were sent off again. Mr. Haxall filed most of these reports on a hook without even glancing over them.

At the end of an hour, when the office was completely deserted by all except the city editor and himself, Miles was again called by name.

"Now," thought he, "I am surely to get an assignment."

And so he did, though it was by no means such an one as he expected. Handing him a ten-cent piece, the city editor said:

"I find that I can't take time to go out for lunch to-day, Mr. Manning, and as the office-boys seem to be absent, will you kindly run out to the nearest restaurant and get me a couple of sandwiches?"

It was disappointing and mortifying to be sent on such an errand, and for an instant Myles' pride rebelled against it. Then the words "under orders," together with Van Cleef's advice, flashed into his mind, and with a cheerful "Certainly, sir," he started off.

When he returned and laid the sandwiches, neatly done up in thin white paper, on Mr. Haxall's desk, that gentleman said:

"I wish you would just step over to Brooklyn,

Mr. Manning, and report to Billings at Police Head-quarters. He has charge of the horse-car strike over there, and telegraphs that he can use another man to advantage."

"Is he a police captain, sir?" asked Miles, not knowing who Billings might be.

"A police captain? Of course not. What put that idea into your head?" replied Mr. Haxall, a little sharply. "Billings is one of our best reporters, and, as I said, is in charge of this street-car strike."

"Oh, thank you, sir," answered Myles, as he started off greatly enlightened by this explanation.

He had no difficulty in finding Brooklyn, because he had been there before; but he was obliged to inquire the way to Police Head-quarters. A few years ago he would have had a long walk before reaching it, for not one of the hundreds of horse-cars that usually throng the tracks on Fulton Street was to be seen. Their absence made that part of the city seem strangely silent and deserted; but fortunately the elevated trains were running, and Myles soon reached his destination.

The street in front of Police Head-quarters was

blocked by a good-natured throng of strikers, through which Myles had some difficulty in forcing his way. At the door he was met by a policeman, who gruffly said: "No admittance, young man," and immediately afterward, when Myles had stated his business, "Certainly, walk right in. You will find Mr. Billings in the inspector's room."

Now Myles had formed an impression of Billings, which was that he must be a man much older than himself, and probably larger and stronger, or else why should he be detailed for this especial work? He expected to find him busily engaged in writing, or dispatching other reporters hither and thither, and having the anxious, self-important air of one who occupied a delicate and responsible position.

The real Billings as he there appeared, seated at a table in the inspector's room intent upon a game of dominos with the inspector himself, was about as different from this impression as it is possible to conceive. He was a slightly-built, delicate-looking young man, apparently not any older than Myles, and with a beardless face. He was exquisitely dressed, deliberate in his movements, and so languid of speech that it seemed an effort for him to talk.

Myles remembered to have seen him in the *Phonograph* office that morning and to have wondered what business that dude had there.

However, this was undoubtedly the Billings to whom Mr. Haxall had ordered him to report, and he accordingly did so.

"Yes," said Billings, with a gentle drawl, as he looked up from his game and regarded Myles with a pair of the most brilliant and penetrating eyes the latter had ever seen. "Just had a dispatch about you from Joe (Mr. Joseph Haxall). New man. Name of Manning. Break you in. Well, Manning, there 's a strike. No horse-cars all day. Railroad officials about to send car out on B—— Avenue line. Leaves stable in fifteen minutes. Probably be some fun. You may go and ride on this car. Have a good time. Take it all in, then come back here."

Myles could have choked the little fellow who coolly sat there telling him to do thus and so. For the second time that day he was strongly tempted to rebel and to maintain his dignity. The idea of that "little absurdity," as he mentally styled Billings, issuing commands to him! Then for the second time came the words "under orders." Had

he not been ordered to obey Billings? To be sure he had, and with an "All right" he left the building.

As he made his way toward the car-stables he wondered why Billings had not undertaken that ride himself, as he seemed to have nothing else to do except play dominos. The more he thought of it the more he became convinced that it was because Billings was afraid.

CHAPTER V.

THE KIND OF A FELLOW BILLINGS WAS.

"YES, Billings must be afraid," said Myles, to himself, "and I don't know but what I would be, too, if I were such a white-faced little chap as he is." Here Myles threw back his own broad shoulders, held his head a trifle higher than usual, and rejoiced in the stalwart frame that had been such an ornament in the X—— "'Varsity" boat. "I wonder what Mr. Haxall meant," he continued to himself, "by speaking of him as one of the best reporters on the *Phonograph*. If he should see him at this moment I rather think he would call him something else. How little a city editor can really know of his men any way!"

While thus thinking Myles was threading the unfamiliar streets of a city as strange to him as though it had been a hundred miles from New York, in search of the car-stables of the B—— Avenue line.

It took him so long to find them that, when he finally did so, the car on which he was ordered to ride had been gone some ten minutes. There was nothing to do but overtake it if possible, and the young reporter started down the track at the same pace he was accustomed to set for his crew when they were out for a "sweater," as they called their training runs.

After running half-a-dozen blocks he began to meet signs of the strike. Here was a broken and overturned market-wagon that had evidently been placed across the track as a barricade, and there a place from which some paving-stones had been torn up. Now he began to be joined by others running in the same direction with himself, and to hear a noise different from the ordinary sounds of the city. As he rounded a corner this noise resolved itself into the shouts, cheers, and yells of an angry mob, and above all rang out sharply an occasional pistol-shot.

The street was filled with hundreds of excited men and boys, whose number was constantly increasing. They were all crowding toward some object of common interest which, when he got close enough to make it out, Myles saw was the very car in which

he had been ordered to ride. It was occupied by a dozen or so of policemen, and was slowly urging its way forward with frequent halts, while another squad of policemen cleared a passage for it through the crowd. Every now and then a paving-stone crashed through a window or splintered the woodwork of the car. A throng of reckless men surged alongside of it, trying in every way they could think of to impede its progress. The company had declared this car should go through. The strikers declared it should not. They tried to lift it from the rails, to overturn it, to drag the driver from his platform, to kill the horses, or in some other way to stop that car.

By a steady use of their long, powerful night-clubs, the police who guarded the car had thus far kept the mob at bay, and prevented them from accomplishing their purpose.

Through this angry throng Myles now began to make his way, for he had been sent to ride with those policemen, and he was determined to do so if it were a possible thing. At first he had comparatively little trouble; but as he approached the thick of the crowd he was obliged to push so roughly,

A HOARSE VOICE SHOUTED THE OMINOUS WORD "SPOTTER." (*Page* 69.)

and make such decided efforts to get ahead, as to draw attention upon himself. At first he was only shoved, and his way was purposely blocked. Then the looks of those about him began to grow black and threatening. A hoarse voice shouted the ominous word, "spotter." The cry was taken up and repeated by a hundred throats. Then Myles received a savage blow from behind. The crowd had recognized that he was not of them, and blindly argued that he must therefore be against them. The situation was a critical one, and Myles realized it.

He was now hemmed in so closely on all sides that to retreat would be impossible even had he thought of such a thing, but he did not. His one idea was still to get to the car, and under a shower of blows, that he warded to the best of his ability, or bore unflinchingly, he struggled forward. All of his strength, pluck, and skill, however, could not save him, and within two minutes he was borne to the ground by the sheer force of numbers, while some of his enemies fell on top of him.

At that moment there came a quick measured tramp of feet, a backward movement of the mob, and the crash of tough locust clubs. The police

were charging to the rescue of the brave young fellow. He struggled to his feet bruised, breathless, hatless, with clothing torn and covered with dust, but with unbroken bones and undaunted spirit.

"Who are you? and what do you mean by making such a row?" demanded the roundsman who led the charging party, as he laid his hand heavily on Myles' shoulder.

"A reporter from the *Phonograph*, who was ordered to ride on that car, and means to if he can fight his way to it," was the answer.

"I might have known it," said the officer, with a resigned air. "You reporters do beat the world for getting us cops into trouble. The idea of a chap like you undertaking to fight that whole crowd! Nobody but a crank or a reporter would think of such a thing. It 's a good thing to carry out orders when you can, but it 's a better to use common-sense and not attempt to undertake impossibilities."

"I was only trying to find out whether it was an impossibility or not," laughed Myles.

While they thus talked the officer led his party of police back to the car. It had stopped while its defenders charged the mob, and now it again started

ahead. Hardly had it got into motion when, with a wild yell, the mob came charging back upon it, and with a tremendous crash the car was lifted from the track and hurled upon its side. It was a full minute before Myles succeeded in clearing himself from the wreck and again scrambling to his feet. As he was rubbing the dirt from his eyes, and thinking what a particularly lively occupation this business of reporting was, he heard a familiar voice call out:

"I say, new man—I don't remember your name—why don't you come up here? You can get an elegant view of the scrimmage."

Myles could hardly believe it, but nevertheless it was really Billings, as beautifully neat and clean as ever, perched up on the side of the overturned car, calmly surveying the scene of tumult, and apparently unconscious of the missiles and occasional pistol-shots that flew past him.

Myles clambered up to a position beside his temporary chief, exclaiming as he did so:

"How on earth do you happen to be here just now! and why do you choose such an exposed place?"

"Oh, I just came down here with the inspector to

see the fun, as we heard the situation was becoming interesting. I chose this place because I 'm a reporter and I can see better what to report from up here than I could down there in the crowd."

"But you are in great danger of getting hit up here."

"Oh, no, they would n't hit me. See how scared they are if I only just look at them."

Billings had an open note-book in his hand, and Myles saw with amazement that whenever he fixed his eyes upon any particular person or group in the crowd, and pretended to be taking notes in his book, these persons immediately turned their backs or slunk away.

"Well, that beats all!" he exclaimed. "What do you do and how do you do it?"

"I don't do any thing, only look at 'em. They think, though, that I am drawing their pictures for one of the illustrated papers, and they don't want to be spotted by having their likenesses printed."

A few minutes later the mob had been pretty thoroughly dispersed, and Billings said:

"Well, this shindy is about finished, so let 's get back to head-quarters and grind out a little copy."

As they walked back together Myles' opinion of Billings' courage was very different from what it had been a short time before, and he said to himself:

"I believe the little chap is made up of pure grit after all."

At the police-station Billings coolly took possession of the inspector's room and writing-table. He seated Myles at one end of this, and, providing him with pen and paper, told him to write out the story of his recent experience. At the same time he threw off his coat and began to write his own report with such rapidity that Myles marvelled at it.

By the time the latter had laboriously thought out and written four sheets of copy, which contained all that he considered worth relating of what he had seen, Billings had covered twenty or more sheets that lay, strewn like autumn leaves, on the floor about his chair. As Myles' pen ceased its scratching Billings looked up and asked:

"Got through?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"Well, you have been short and sweet. I 've just begun; but then I 'm on space, you know, and that makes all the difference. By the way, I wish you

would run up to Williamsburg and look around a bit. I understand there 's to be a secret meeting of strikers held over there somewhere, and we ought to know something about it."

Myles started at once, only stopping on the way to buy himself a hat, and, as it was late, to get a bit of something to eat at a miserable restaurant, which was the only one he could find. Then for hours he walked the streets of that part of Brooklyn known as Williamsburg, knowing no more than the man in the moon where to look for the secret meeting. He inquired of all the street-car men he could find, in every saloon he saw, and of several policemen, but could get no information concerning it. Finally, late at night, worn out and discouraged, he concluded that no meeting had been held, and returned to the place where he had left Billings, only to find that the young man had gone back to New York some hours before.

It was after midnight when Myles reached the *Phonograph* office and reported to the night city editor, who sat at the desk used by Mr. Haxall in the daytime, that he had been unsuccessful in his attempt to discover the meeting. He was about to

add that he did not believe any had been held, when the busy night man interrupted him with:

"Oh, that 's all right. Billings got what there was of it and turned it in an hour ago."

After waiting in the bustling place a few minutes longer, a stranger among strangers, Myles concluded that he was only in the way and had better go home. When he reached the tiny room that was now the only place he could call his own, he was physically and mentally exhausted by the hardest day's work he had ever done.

Myles was awakened the next morning by a knock at his door and Van Cleef's voice inquiring if he were not ready to go out for breakfast.

"Excuse me for waking you," said Van Cleef, as Myles appeared, "but I was so anxious to hear of your first day's experience that I hated to leave the house without seeing you. How did you get on? What did Mr. Haxall say about the dress-suit? And what was your first assignment?"

"Oh, I got on after a fashion. He said it was all right, and my first assignment was to go out and buy some sandwiches for his lunch."

"Honestly?"

"Yes, honestly, that was the very first thing he gave me to do."

"Well, you have begun with the rudiments of reporting. Was that all you had to do?"

"Oh, no; I was sent over to Brooklyn to fight a mob."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. Look at my clothes, and this new hat that I had to buy to replace the one lost in the fight, if you don't believe me." Here Myles glanced ruefully at his coat and trousers, that still bore tokens of their recent hard usage. Then buying a *Phonograph* from a newsboy, and pointing to the leading article on the first page, which was a three-column story of the street-car strike, he said:

"There 's my job."

"That!" exclaimed Van Cleef, incredulously, as he noted the heading and length of the article. "Why, I thought Billings was doing that strike."

"Oh, yes," replied Myles, carelessly, "there was a little chap named Billings over there who worked with me."

"'A little chap named Billings who worked with me.' Ho, ho! ha, ha!" shouted Van Cleef. "If

that is n't good! I only wish 'Old Bills,' as the boys call him, could hear you say that. Really, though, how much did you write of this?"

"Well, I really did write something; but I as really can't find a word of it in this article. I declare, though, if here is n't an account of that secret meeting in Williamsburg that I walked my feet off looking for and could n't find. How do you suppose the paper got hold of it?"

"Why, I suppose some Associated-Press man stumbled across it and sent it in. Then, of course, it was turned over to Billings, as he had charge of all the strike matter, and he worked it into his story. But where did you look for that meeting?"

"Everywhere."

"Did you go to the police-stations and inquire of the sergeants, or to the head-quarters of any of the trades-unions?"

"Why, no," answered Myles, reflectively. "I never thought of those places."

"Oh, well," said Van Cleef, consolingly, "you can't learn it all in a day; but you 'll soon get the hang of news-gathering. I am sorry, though, that your screed did n't get printed."

"There is an account here of running that car over the line, giving the names of the officers who were on board and of the driver, but it never occurred to me to get those, nor is the rest of it at all as I wrote it. It is a great deal better than mine was."

"Probably Billings took your stuff and worked it over," suggested the other. "You see it all counts as space for him, and he thought, as you are on salary, it would n't make any difference to you."

"What do you mean by 'space'?" asked Myles. "I heard the word several times yesterday, but did n't understand it."

"Why, most New York reporters are 'space men'—that is, they do not receive a regular sum of money every week, without regard to how much or how little they have in the paper, but are paid so much per column for what they get printed. The *Phonograph* and one or two other papers, for instance, pay eight dollars per column, while others pay seven, six, and so on down to three dollars per column."

"Do the space men generally make more than fifteen dollars a week?"

"Well I should say they did! Why, on the *Phonograph* they will average five dollars a day right along, and in good weeks some of them make sixty,

seventy, and even as high as a hundred dollars a week. There is Billings, for instance. If this three-column story is all his, as it probably is, there is twenty-four dollars for him for a single day's work."

"It seems to me I should prefer to be on space," said Myles.

"So would most fellows. There is not only more money in it, but it is more exciting, and more like regular business. On the *Phonograph*, though, all new men have to serve an apprenticeship at a small salary for a long time before they are entitled to go on space."

"How long?" asked Myles.

"It depends entirely on the fellow himself. Some have to wait years. Others make their stories so interesting and prove such valuable reporters that they can demand to be put on space within a few months. Billings, I believe, was only three months on salary."

"Who is this Billings, any way?"

"I don't know exactly who he is. He comes from the West, somewhere; Chicago, I believe; but he is one of the very best all-round reporters in the city, as well as one of the coolest and pluckiest fellows in a tight place I ever heard of. They tell the story

of him that one day, while he was working for a Chicago paper, he was sent out to report an anarchist meeting. He was with the police when a lighted bomb was thrown almost at his feet. Everybody scattered—police and all—but Billings deliberately picked the thing up and plunged it into a barrel of water close at hand that some masons were using in front of a new building. Oh, he 's a cool one, and you can count on him every time. He is one of the best chaps going, too, and always ready to help a fellow-reporter who is out of luck. By the way, that little story of mine about the suicide brought in twelve dollars, sent to the city editor in small sums, for the benefit of the family. I took it to the woman last night."

"Well," said Myles, "I never thought of a newspaper as a charitable institution before."

"You did n't! Well, they are; and the *Phonograph* distributes more cash charity every year than any one of the regular societies for the purpose in the city."

Here the two separated, and Myles started downtown wondering what novel experience this day might hold in store for him.

CHAPTER VI.

A REPORTER AT HOME.

WHEN Myles reached the office, on the second morning of his new life, and entered the city-room, it struck him as so cool, clean, and quiet, as contrasted with its glare, heat, and bustle of a few hours before, when he left it tired out and discouraged, that he could hardly realize it was the same place. Although he had not yet been given a desk or a locker he felt very much at home, and ventured to say "Good-morning" to several of the reporters who were already at their desks. Some of them answered him pleasantly, while one or two simply stared at him, as much as to say: "Who is this fellow, any way?"

More out of curiosity than any thing else Myles glanced at the mail slate, and to his surprise found his name among those for whom letters were waiting. Mr. Brown handed him two. The first was

from his mother, expressing surprise and disappointment at the line of business into which he had gone, and begging him to come home and talk it over with them before committing himself to it. Myles smiled as he finished this letter, and thought: "Poor mother! she regards reporters about as I did before I knew any thing of them; but perhaps I shall be able to make her think differently."

The other note was in a strange handwriting, and ran as follows:

My Dear Proxy:

If you will call some time to-day during business hours at room Q, Mills Building, and inquire for Mr. Leigh, he will give you a bit of news that you may consider worthy of publication in the *Phonograph*.

Your Friend of the Oxygen.

"Here 's a mystery," thought Myles; "I wonder what it means. I guess I 'll run down there if I have a chance; there may be something in it."

Just then a pleasant-faced young man, who had been chatting with a group of reporters, and whom Myles had noticed as one that everybody in the office seemed glad of a chance to talk with, stepped up to him and held out his hand, saying:

"You are the new reporter, I believe, and your name is Manning. Mine is Rolfe, and I am glad to welcome to the office a fellow who can hold his own in a street row as pluckily as you did yesterday."

"I am much obliged," said Myles, taking the other's offered hand, "and very glad indeed to make your acquaintance, Mr. Rolfe, for it does seem rather lonely here when you don't know anybody. But how did you hear any thing about yesterday?"

"Why, there is a full account of your little scrimmage in one of the Brooklyn papers of last evening, though of course your name is n't mentioned. You are only spoken of as a New York reporter; but Billings told us who it was. Yesterday was your first day, was it not?"

"Yes," replied Myles, "and when I saw that I did n't have any thing in the paper this morning I was afraid it would be my last. Is n't every reporter expected to have something in every number?"

"No, indeed," laughed Rolfe. "If they did their number would have to be reduced at least one half, or else the paper increased to double its present size. Why, a large part of the matter written goes into the waste-basket, which in old times, when the *Pho-*

nograph was only a four-page paper, we used to call the 'fifth page.' There are several editors employed in this office merely to throw away all the copy they possibly can and to condense the rest to its most compact form. Don't you worry about not getting any thing in. It may be a week or more before a word of what you write gets printed. I believe it was a month before my first article got into type, and I was twice warned by Mr. Haxall to brace up."

"How is it with your articles now?" asked Myles, curiously.

"Oh, I 'm doing fairly well, and get something into the paper every now and then," answered the other, carelessly. "I happened to make a lucky hit with a story one day, and since then I 've had nothing to complain of. You 'll do the same if you only peg away at it, and then you will be all right. You have already succeeded in getting yourself talked about, and that is half the battle with all literary workers, even including reporters."

All this was very consoling to Myles. It gave him a happier feeling than he had known since he learned of the family troubles that caused him to leave college and take up this business of reporting.

Of the unassuming, pleasant-faced fellow who thus made friendly advances toward him he soon discovered that he was the leading reporter on the paper, and that there was rarely a number of it issued that did not contain a column of interesting matter furnished by him.

At the conclusion of their little chat, Rolfe, who was evidently pleased with Myles, introduced him to several of the other fellows, and the young reporter felt that at last he was really started on his career.

On this day he had an experience of the curious contrasts that make up a reporter's life. He was first sent to find out if it were true that two sets of triplets had been born the night before in a great east-side tenement-house. Then he attended a brilliant wedding in Grace Church, and soon afterward a large funeral. All of these assignments were given him by Mr. Haxall with many injunctions as to their importance, and charges to obtain and write out every possible item of interesting information concerning them. Myles worked faithfully and prepared what he considered a remarkably full and good report of each case. To the wedding and funeral he gave

particular attention, procuring a full list of the guests at one, the mourners at the other, and an elaborate description of the floral displays at both.

For all this, in the next day's paper the interesting triplets were not mentioned, the wedding was disposed of in a paragraph, and the third report was condensed to "The funeral of Mr. Blank took place yesterday from the Church of the Apostles."

So Myles remarked to Van Cleef: "I can't see the use of putting a fellow to all the trouble of getting these stories and then not printing them. I could have written the three lines they did furnish without leaving the office."

Van Cleef answered: "That is the editor's look-out, and not yours. So long as they pay you for your trouble you have no right to complain."

Myles did get one item into the paper, though, and it was printed in full just as he wrote it, at which he was greatly pleased. During the day he had found time to run down to the Mills Building and see the Mr. Leigh mentioned in his note of that morning. This gentleman gave him a bit of news regarding certain important railway changes that was of the greatest interest to all Wall Street

men, and the *Phonograph* was the only paper in which it appeared the next morning. Thus it was what is known to reporters as a "beat" on all the other papers, and for obtaining it Myles received great credit. He afterward obtained a number of just such "beats" from the same source, and gained quite a reputation by them; but he was wise enough to say nothing of how he got hold of them.

So the week passed quickly and busily, and at its end, though he had got but one item of any account into the paper, Myles felt that he had learned more than during any ten preceding weeks of his life, and he was already a most enthusiastic reporter.

On Saturday morning he received from the cashier a little brown envelope containing ten dollars, which, as it was the first money he had ever earned, gave him a feeling of manly independence such as he had never before felt. That evening he went home to spend Sunday, for, as every *Phonograph* reporter was entitled to have for his own one day out of the week, Myles had chosen that as his "day off."

The boy had felt manly and self-important the week before, when he went home as a college student and captain of the "'Varsity" crew; but he felt

doubly so now as a self-supporting man of business, even if he was only a reporter.

His mother knew his step as he approached the house, and was waiting for him at the open door.

"How could you, Myles!" she exclaimed, between kisses and hugs. "How could you become a horrid, common reporter?"

"I could n't, mother. I mean to be a most uncommon reporter, and not horrid in any sense of the word."

"But what shall I tell people, when they find out that you have left college and ask what business you have gone into?"

"Tell them the truth, mother, and I 'll back you up in it," replied Myles, laughing.

As he made his way to the big chair in which his father sat, the blind man said:

"It is good to hear your voice again, my boy, and a great relief to hear you speak so cheerfully of your new business. I was afraid you had gone into it in a fit of desperation, and not from choice."

"Well, to tell the truth, I did go into it in somewhat that way, father, but now I mean to stay in it from a real liking for it, and because I can already

see that it may lead to many much better things. But you are not ashamed to have me a reporter, as mother seems to be, are you, sir?"

"Not a bit of it, my son; I am not ashamed to have you in any honest business; only reporters always seemed to me an annoying and somewhat mischievous set of fellows."

Here Mrs. Manning broke in with:

"Oh, Myles, how can you say that I could ever be ashamed of any thing you did? You know I could n't; but then some things are so different from others."

"So they are, mother," replied Myles, soberly; "you never said a truer thing in your life." Then, turning again to his father, he added: "That 's just it, sir. You never knew much about reporters, any more than the rest of us did. I am beginning to learn something about them, though, and to see them as they really are, and I shall try to open the family eyes to look at them as I do. Oh, father, I forgot! I did n't mean to use those words. We really do mean to open your eyes, though, some time, so that you will see reporters as well as all the other good fellows who come in your way; see if we don't. But where is Kate?"

"Getting your supper ready," replied Mrs. Manning.

"Good for her! She appreciates the needs of a fellow who has been mealing in restaurants and at lunch-counters for a week."

Just then Kate Manning entered the room with a warm welcome for her brother and the announcement that his supper waited.

"Well, it sha'n't get tired waiting for me," exclaimed Myles; "but, Kate, what is your opinion of reporters?"

"I never knew much about any except one reporter," was the smiling reply; "but if they all turn out as well as he did I should think it was the most splendid business a young man could go into."

"Who was that?" asked Mrs. Manning and Myles together.

"Charles Dickens," answered the Vassar girl, "who is said to have collected most of the material he afterward used so wonderfully while he was only a reporter."

"Good for you, Kate!" shouted Myles. "I always said you were a brick; but now I know that you are a gold brick, and solid right through. Let 's go to supper."

After supper Myles sat down to convince his family that reporters were a generally misunderstood and unappreciated race, and that, having the opportunity to become one, he would have been worse than foolish had he thrown it away. He repeated all of Van Cleef's arguments, and added to them the small items of personal experience that he had already gained. In short, he was so enthusiastic, and waxed so eloquent over his theme, that he succeeded in completely reversing the opinions formerly held by his parents. As for Kate, she needed no convincing, and long before he finished she exclaimed :

" If I were not a girl I believe I would rather be a literary man than any thing else in the world, except an artist, and I 'd begin by being a reporter too."

Mrs. Manning was most pleased by what Myles told her about the newspapers making of their reporters agents for the distribution of charity to the people in distress whom they discovered and wrote about.

Mr. Manning said :

" Well, Myles, any business that can so arouse your enthusiasm must possess merit, and I only hope you will stick to this one until you win success from

it. By the way, what is your present ambition? Is it still to enter politics?"

"I think my present ambition is to get on space," replied Myles, laughing. "Then I should like to be a special or foreign correspondent. If ever I get that far, then I will look ahead and see what comes next."

The next day, as on the preceding Sunday, Myles accompanied his sister Kate to church. Somehow or other his changed conditions of life had become known throughout the little community, and many of those who had gazed admiringly at Myles Manning, the captain of the "'Varsity" crew, the Sunday before, now looked at him with curiosity as a reporter. The former they could understand, but the latter was something to be wondered at as though it belonged to a strange and uncommon species of being.

As brother and sister left the church several of their acquaintances spoke to them, and one young woman said with a simper: "Oh, Mr. Manning, now that you are a reporter I hope you are n't going to write us all up."

Another asked: "Won't you put a piece in your

paper about my sewing-class, Mr. Manning? It would do so much good!" While still another, with a warning shake of her head: "Take care, Mr. Manning. We all know what naughty people you newspaper men are."

To all these idiotic speeches Myles smiled and tried to return polite answers, but inwardly he fumed at their silliness. He was thankful enough to reach home and escape from this petty persecution. He afterward learned that all reporters are subject to the same sort of annoyance when in company with weak-minded people.

There was one bit of home news at which Myles hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry. It was that the house had been well rented for the season, and that the family was to remove at once to the gardener's cottage. As he philosophically remarked, however: "If the rest could bear it cheerfully he certainly ought to be able to."

Kate said:

"Perhaps some time, Myles, I 'll find a way to earn money as well as you, and then we 'll get the old house back again; won't we, dear? I 'm giving every spare minute to my drawing, and by the time

you get to writing books perhaps I may be able to illustrate them."

"So we will, my brick of gold!" answered Myles, drawing the girl to him and kissing her. "But you are doing your full share now, and if you become any more useful than you are, the first thing I know you will be taking care of me as well as of the rest of the family."

"No fear of that," laughed Kate. "Your wife will have that to do, if you ever get one. But you won't ever, will you, dear?"

"Not if I know myself," answered Myles.

The next morning he left for the city by the same early train that he had taken a week before, but this time it was not to leave a college. It was to re-enter a school of real life in which he was already an eager and promising student.

In glancing over the morning paper while on his way to town Myles read a description of the boat crews that were to race at New London the following week, and were already in their quarters on the Thames. His own name was not mentioned, but all the praise that should have been his for selecting and training the X—— College crew was given to Ben Watkins, the new captain.

This omission made Myles feel very sore and bitter against the hard fate that compelled him to resign all the glory that had been so nearly within his grasp. For a few minutes he rebelled fiercely against it. Then, with a thought of the dear ones he had just left, his mood changed, and he inwardly exclaimed: "No, I would n't go back again if I could. Those fellows will get their names into the papers for a few days, but what will it all amount to in the end? Just nothing. I, on the other hand, am helping make the papers themselves, and am on my way to a position in which I can put names in or leave them out, as I think best. No, I 'd rather be a reporter than captain of the crew. I should like to see that race, though. I wonder if Mr. Haxall would let me report it if I asked him, and told him what I knew about it. I 'll ask him, anyhow."

CHAPTER VII.

"NO LOAFERS NOR REPORTERS ADMITTED."

AS the young reporter entered the *Phonograph* office that Monday morning he wondered whether or not his week of trial had been satisfactory. Was he to retain his position, or was he to be politely told that he was a failure, and that the paper had no need of him? The anxiety aroused by the mere thought of such a thing weighed heavily upon him, and he entered the city-room feeling like an accused person when about to hear the verdict that shall either set him free or consign him to a cell. Thus agitated, but setting his teeth and walking bravely forward to meet his fate, Myles was stopped by hearing Mr. Brown say:

"Oh, Mr. Manning, wait a moment, if you please. Here are the keys of a vacant desk and of locker No. 20, that the city editor says you are to have."

The verdict was rendered, and it was in his favor. He need have no more fears. The week of trial had

"I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN BREAK THROUGH THAT RULE, EVEN IN YOUR CASE." (*Page* 96.)

proved satisfactory to his superior officers, and they had decided that it was safe to place him "under orders."

"Hurrah for the new reporter and future editor-in-chief of the *Phonograph!*" he mentally shouted.

To all outward appearance, however, he was as calm as usual, and only the heightened color of his face gave token of his excitement.

Taking the keys from Mr. Brown, and thanking him for them, Myles hung his hat in locker No 20. His locker! Then he found the desk that was to be his, unlocked its empty drawer, opened it, closed it again, and sat down before it to indulge in a day-dream of all the fine things he would write at that desk; of the special articles he would prepare, and hide away in that drawer until they should be finished and ready to win for him a name.

These pleasant thoughts were interrupted, and Myles started as a hand was laid on his shoulder, and Rolfe's cordial voice said:

"Good-morning, Manning. Allow me to congratulate you upon getting a desk. In this office the possession of a desk is the sign that a man is doing satisfactory work and is looked

upon with favor. If, however, at any time Mr. Brown should politely ask you for the key, you might as well resign at once and look for another job, for you would get no more assignments here. It would be the signal of dismissal. I am not afraid for you, though, and I predict that you will hold the key to your present position until you are ready to resign it of your own accord. By the way, what are you going to make your special line of work? Nearly every reporter, while of course always ready to accept any assignment that is offered, has some specialty in which he excels. Some take to politics, detective work, or court reporting, and some to marine work, such as yacht-racing, wrecks, launches, and all things connected with the sea. Others make a specialty of athletic sports, and still others of society events. My own specialty, so far as I can find out that I have one, is, I believe, humoristical. At least I have the wholly undeserved credit of writing humorous stories."

"I 'm sure I can't imagine what mine will be," laughed Myles, who felt particularly joyous just at that moment. "I don't feel that I know much about any thing, unless it is boats and boat-racing."

Then he confided to Rolfe his desire to witness the great college boat-race at New London, and asked his advice about applying for the assignment.

"Certainly," replied the other. "Apply for it by all means. Mr. Haxall likes to find out in that way what the fellows are most interested in, and makes a point of giving a reporter the style of work most congenial to his tastes if he possibly can. His theory is that a fellow will do much better if he is interested in his job than he would if it were distasteful to him. Of course it does not happen one time out of ten that a fellow gets the particular assignment that he would prefer; but that is not Mr. Haxall's fault, and he is always glad to have the preference expressed."

Thus encouraged, Myles stepped to the city editor's desk, and, interrupting for a moment the busy work of clipping memoranda from the morning papers, made his request.

Mr. Haxall listened patiently to all that he had to say, and then smilingly answered:

"I am very sorry, Mr. Manning, but that assignment has already been given to Billings. I have, however, another piece of work for you that, I

believe, you will do just as well. It is of the utmost importance, and will, I think, interest you greatly. I wish you would set out at once and obtain every possible detail regarding this case."

Thus saying the city editor handed Myles a paragraph that he had just clipped from a morning paper, and instantly resumed his interrupted work. Myles' curiosity had been greatly aroused by these remarks, and he imagined that some really important piece of work was about to be confided to him. What was his disgust, then, upon reading the slip as he slowly returned to his desk, to find that it was only a stabbing affray among the Italians of the "Bend," one of the filthiest slums of the city!

"It is too bad!" he exclaimed to Rolfe, who was waiting to learn the result of his interview. "The idea of giving me such a wretched job as this, and trying to make me think it was such an important one too."

"Oh no, it is n't too bad," laughed Rolfe. "It is only one of the little jokes that Joe delights in, and he will chuckle over it to himself for an hour. But, really, you know that job has to be done by somebody, and he only gave it, impartially, to the first man who happened along, which was you. It would

have been just the same if I had gone to him instead of you. He would have given it to me just as quick. Joe has his failings, of course, like the rest of us, and sometimes I get awfully provoked at him; but I must say that I consider him the most absolutely just man I ever knew, and I believe his constant aim is to show perfect impartiality in all his dealings with those under him. That is more than can be said of most city editors."

So Myles, somewhat comforted by these words, started for the "Bend," instead of for New London, and passed the greater part of the long hot day amid such scenes of misery as only a great city can disclose. For the next two days also, it seemed as though all the assignments of this nature fell to him. At their end he was soul-sick of the disgusting work he had been called upon to perform, and the desperate wretchedness amid which he had lived. On the third morning, as he entered the office in a dejected frame of mind, wondering what form of human suffering he would have to encounter that day, Mr. Haxall called him and said:

"I believe, Mr. Manning, that you have had some practical experience in college boat-racing."

"A little, sir," answered Myles, modestly.

"Well," continued the city editor, "while Billings is a most admirable descriptive writer, he is not as familiar as I could wish with the details of timing a crew, noting their form, and so forth. I have decided, therefore, to send you to New London to help him out. The race will not take place until the day after to-morrow, but I think you had better run up there to-day so as to be on hand. You will, of course, report to Billings, and here is an order on the cashier for twenty-five dollars for your expenses. If you need any more, Billings will furnish it."

Myles had so completely dismissed all thoughts of the boat-race from his mind, that had Mr. Haxall offered him the position of managing editor he could hardly have been more amazed than by this assignment. He was, however, rapidly learning to conceal all signs of surprise upon such occasions, and so, answering, "Very well, sir," he took the order on the cashier and left the office.

An hour later he was rolling out of the Grand Central station on his way to New London, while the scenes amid which he had passed the preceding two days were already fading beneath the influence of pleasant anticipations.

Arrived at New London, he had no difficulty in finding Billings, who, having secured for his own use the finest apartment in the best hotel in the city, was now the centre of an interested group of reporters gathered behind its closed doors.

"Hello, Manning!" cried the generally languid Billings, who now appeared greatly excited. "Come in. You are just in time to take part in our indignation meeting. What do you think the nice little boys of the X—— College crew have gone and done?"

"I am sure I don't know," replied Myles, flushing at the tone in which his recent mates were spoken of. "I don't believe, though, that it is any thing to be ashamed of."

"Is n't it, though!" cried several voices, while Billings said:

"It is something they ought to be ashamed of if they are not. Why, they actually have had the cheek to put a big sign out in front of their quarters bearing the legend, 'No Loafers nor Reporters Admitted.' What do you think of that for impudence, when, if it was n't for the press, as represented by us reporters, their little penny races would never be heard of outside of their own little circle of friends?

Now, there are plenty of college graduates among us here. We know just how conceited and 'cocky' these young fellows feel, and we can make allowances for them, but this is going a little too far. What do you say to it, Manning?"

With face as red as fire, but with a brave, honest look in his eyes, Myles stood up and said:

"I expect I am responsible for this insult, gentlemen, and right here I wish to apologize for it, both on my own account and in behalf of the crew of which I was so recently the captain."

Here there was a slight movement of surprise among the other reporters, most of whom were strangers to Myles, and they regarded him curiously.

"Yes," he continued, "I was captain of the X—— College crew, and I suggested that, on coming here this year, we put up some such notice as that of which Billings speaks. I did so in utter ignorance of what sort of fellows the majority of reporters are, and because last year's crew was greatly bothered by one who made himself a perfect nuisance. He hung about the quarters all the time, patronized the boys, undertook to tell them that their style of rowing was entirely wrong, and tried to have them

change it to suit his ideas. Above all, his reports, as published and widely copied, were so filled with absurdities and falsehoods regarding the crew as made them a laughing-stock for the community. I do not see him here this year, and I am glad of it, but, for fear he would be, I suggested putting up that notice, because we did not know how to exclude one reporter without making a rule that should apply to all. I am sorry now that I ever made such a suggestion, and still more so that my successor has seen fit to carry it out. If you fellows will only have a little patience, and not send any thing to your papers about this matter before my return, I will go out to the quarters and see what influence I can use to have that notice removed."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Billings. "You have spoken out like a gentleman, Manning, and I think I can answer for every reporter here by saying that we accept your very handsome apology for your share in this unfortunate business. We will also give you the chance you ask for, to exert your influence toward having the thing taken down, before we begin to make it unpleasant for them in the papers; won't we, fellows?"

"Of course we will," was the almost unanimous reply.

There was, however, one fellow mean enough to slip unnoticed out of the room and telegraph the whole affair to his paper, laying all the blame upon poor Myles, whom he spoke of as having repented when it was too late. For this act he was afterward kicked off the press-boat by the other reporters, and so lost his chance of seeing the race.

In the meantime Myles and Billings hurried from the hotel, engaged a horse and buggy, crossed the ferry to the Groton side of the river, and drove rapidly up the pleasant country road along its eastern bank to the X—— quarters.

As they drew up in front of the roomy farm-house that Myles remembered so well, he sprang out and found himself face to face with his old rival, Ben Watkins. Ben, who was now captain of the crew, was walking toward the front gate, above which was displayed the cause of all the trouble.

"How are you, Ben?" said Myles, cordially, as he stepped toward the gate with the intention of entering.

"Ah, Manning, that you?" answered the other in

a constrained tone. "Glad to see you—that is," he added, hesitatingly, "if you come as a friend."

"As a friend?" questioned Myles in amazement, stopping outside the gate, against which Watkins now leaned in such a manner as to prevent its being opened. "What can you mean? How else could I come to the quarters of the X—— College crew?"

"Oh, well," replied Watkins, a little uneasily, "I heard you had gone on to some paper, and I did n't know but what you came as a reporter."

"So I do come as a reporter, as well as a friend of X——," replied Myles, whose voice trembled a little, though he tried to speak calmly and naturally. "I have been sent here to help report this race for the *Phonograph*. But what difference does that make?"

"A great deal," answered Watkins; "for I don't see how we can break through that rule"—here he pointed to the notice above their heads—"even in your case."

"Do you mean to say that, merely because he has become a reporter, you refuse to admit to these grounds the man who was captain of this crew only two weeks ago?" cried Myles, hotly.

"That 's about the size of it. If we exclude one

reporter we must exclude all. Those, I believe, were your own words. I 'm sorry, but it would n't do, you know, to let friendship interfere with business."

"If I acknowledge that I was a fool when I made that speech, if I tell you that this miserable notice is one of the biggest mistakes you could possibly make, and beg you, for the sake of the college and of the crew, to take it down, won't you do it?" asked Myles.

"No; I don't think we will. Of course it is natural for you to think that way now. Perhaps I would in your place; but, as I have not the motive that you have to change my opinion of reporters, I rather think we will let the notice remain where it is, and act up to it."

"Then," replied Myles, whose hot temper was rapidly escaping from his control, "all I have to say is that, in putting up this notice, you made a fool of yourself, and in keeping it up you not only disgrace yourself but the college you represent."

"And in reply to such a very friendly speech I would remark that when a fellow, pretending to be a gentleman, relinquishes those pretensions and becomes a reporter, he has descended to the level for which nature intended him," retorted Watkins.

"If it were not for breaking up the crew on the eve of a great race, I 'd make you apologize for those words, Ben Watkins!" cried Myles.

"You can't do it, and you dare not try," was the mocking answer.

Myles had so completely lost control of himself by this time, that he would have answered this taunt by something much more forcible than words, and undoubtedly Ben Watkins would have had cause to regret arousing the wrath of the young athlete before whom the best men in the X—— gymnasium had been unable to stand up; but just then a soft hand was laid on the young reporter's shoulder, and Billings' languid voice drawled out:

"Let the poor fellow go, Manning. He will hurt himself more than you can hurt him in the long run."

Myles allowed himself to be persuaded, and in another minute the two reporters were driving rapidly back toward the city.

"It is too bad," said Myles, presently, "that your chance of getting a description of the crew, and how they live in training, and of the boat, should be knocked in the head by that fellow's stupidity."

"Oh, I 'll get all that to-morrow," was the careless reply.

"But they won't admit you."

"I guess they will, and tell me all I want to know, and show me every thing I want to see. I should n't wonder if they even invited me to go out with them in their boat—and I 'll do it too."

"Whatever can you mean?" asked Myles.

"Wait until to-morrow and I 'll show you the trick," said Billings.

CHAPTER VIII.

"LORD STEEREM," THE COXSWAIN.

BILLINGS charged his companion to say nothing of the scheme for playing a trick upon Ben Watkins that his fertile brain was busily hatching, and Myles promised that he would not. It was easy to keep this promise, seeing that he had no idea what the scheme was, for the other did not divulge his plans, and Myles was left to imagine what he pleased. He was, of course, obliged to announce to all the other reporters his failure to have the obnoxious notice removed, and they at once began to prepare indignant dispatches to their respective papers concerning it.

In the meantime, leaving Myles in his room at the hotel writing a detailed description of the X—— crew, their boat, style of rowing, etc., which, of all the reporters, he alone was able to do, Billings was flying about the city and displaying an amount of

energy wonderful to behold in one of his temperament. At the same time his movements were veiled with such secrecy that no one for a moment suspected what he was up to. He visited a milliner's, where he procured a quantity of broad black ribbon and a yard or two of blue silk. All this he took to, and left with, a local artist, with whom he held a short consultation.

He next went to a certain wharf, at which lay a handsome, saucy-looking, steam launch, just arrived from New York. As the press-boat, in which it was intended that all the newspaper men should follow the race, was notoriously slow, and it was certain she would not get within half a mile of the finish, the *Phonograph* had provided this swift craft for the especial use of its own reporters. This had been kept a secret, and no one, except Billings and the captain of the launch, knew to whom she belonged or why she was there.

After a talk with this captain, that seemed to afford the latter much amusement, Billings engaged a row-boat and was pulled off to one of the many fine yachts lying in the harbor. While he was gone the captain of the launch called his engineer and the

two men who formed his crew, and took them to a hat-store in the town.

Billings spent an hour on board the yacht. When he left he carried a bundle of something, and his face expressed the liveliest satisfaction. He took this bundle to his elegant apartment in the hotel, and then sat down with Myles to prepare his dispatch. After writing steadily for more than an hour with his usual marvellous rapidity, he read to his companion an article on the X—— crew and its recent action, so bright and witty, and placing them in such a ridiculous light, that at its conclusion the latter was sore with laughter.

When the New York papers reached New London the next morning, which was that of the day before the great race, the *Phonograph* immediately became so popular that its entire edition was quickly sold at more than double the usual price. In it Billings' humorous article on the X—— College men set everybody to laughing. Myles' detailed description of all the crew had done, and hoped to do, was proof to the public that their exclusion of reporters had failed of its intended object. Besides this, the *Phonograph* contained another exclusive bit of

news that excited a lively interest. It was only a paragraph, and read as follows:

"It is reported that Lord Steerem, of England, the famous Oxford coxswain, may be expected to reach New London to-day. His lordship, who is about to cruise in American waters in his splendid steam yacht *Happy Thought*, takes the liveliest interest in our ''Varsity' boat-racing. He has expressed such an ardent desire to witness the event of to-morrow that he will probably come directly to this place before touching at any other American port. Of course the college men assembled here are full of curiosity to meet so able an authority on all matters pertaining to boat-racing, and he will undoubtedly be warmly welcomed at the head-quarters of the respective crews."

The reporters of the other papers, in which this interesting item had not appeared, besieged Myles and Billings for further information regarding his lordship and his expected arrival. As neither of them had any to give, their questioners gradually dispersed, each determined to be the first to secure an interview with the distinguished foreigner. Some of them went down the harbor in row-boats, and

others haunted the wharves, while some even drove down to the Pequot House, on the chance that the English yacht might stop there before proceeding up the river. They were all doomed to disappointment; for up to two o'clock nothing had been seen of the *Happy Thought.*

It had been arranged that at this hour the press-boat, taking such reporters as wished to go, should steam up the river for a last look at the course and the quarters in which the crews were spending a day of idleness and complete rest. At two o'clock, therefore, all the reporters ceased for a time to watch for the English yacht, and hastened aboard the press-boat, each being afraid to stay behind lest the others might get hold of something he would be sorry to miss.

At Billings' suggestion Myles went with the rest, but his fellow-worker remained behind, claiming that he had important business to attend to. He began to attend to it, with an activity that would have amazed his companions had they been on hand to witness it, the moment he was left alone.

While he was thus busy the press-boat, with its load of jolly passengers, steamed slowly and heavily

up the river. After half an hour of laborious puffing and snorting, as it drew near the head of the course and came within sight of the quarters, somebody on board called out:

"Hello! Here 's a lively little fellow coming up behind us. It must be a launch from one of the big yachts."

All eyes were instantly directed toward the slender craft that, with polished brass-work gleaming in the bright sunlight, and gay colors flying at stem and stern, was overhauling them so rapidly that they seemed to be anchored. The curiosity with which they watched its approach was changed to incredulous amazement as it shot past them, and they could decipher the private signal that fluttered above its bows. It was a burgee of blue silk on which in letters of gold they read the name *Happy Thought.* The same name appeared on the black bands encircling the jaunty straw hats of its crew. Could Lord Steerem have arrived? It must be so. Yes, there was the flag of the Royal Yacht Squadron flying from the after jack-staff, and, in the glass-encased pilot-house they caught a fleeting glimpse of a slight, dark-mustached figure, clad in yachting uniform.

That must be Lord Steerem himself. But how could he have given them the slip? How aggravating that he should have arrived just at this time.

"Hurry up, captain! Crowd on steam, engineer! Never mind your boiler. We must n't lose sight of this fellow now. The whole country is anxious to learn of his movements. Who is he? Why, a swell from over the water. An English lord. An Oxford coxswain. The most important personage to arrive in America for many a day!"

So the press-boat puffed and labored harder than ever, while the excited reporters crowded forward in their anxiety not to lose sight of the swift launch cleaving the waters ahead of them like an arrow. They bore the bow of their boat deep into the water and lifted her stern high in the air in their eagerness to secure the best places from which to see, and the poor old craft almost came to a stand-still. Still they yelled: "Faster—faster, captain! Pile on your steam, engineer!"

At last the dainty launch dashed up in front of the X—— College boat-house. Her engine was stopped, reversed, and she lay motionless beside the float. Then a slightly built figure in glittering uni-

form stepped from her and sauntered toward a group of the crew who were watching him curiously.

From them Ben Watkins, the captain, stepped forward, and to him the stranger handed a card bearing a gorgeous crest and the inscription "Lord Steerem, Brasscheek College, Oxford."

Ben had read the morning *Phonograph* and knew this distinguished arrival was expected, but to have the honor of his first visit was almost too good to be true. It was overwhelming, and he hardly knew how to frame a proper speech of welcome.

"I am sure we are very glad to see you—that is, I mean you have done us a great honor, Mr.—I mean your lordship. Will you step up and look at our quarters?" he finally managed to say.

Ben Watkins was a splendid oarsman; nobody could deny that, but he was nothing of a society man, and to have a real live lord on his hands was almost too much for him.

"Aw, yes," replied Lord Steerem, with a most affected drawl. "Don't care if I do. Queer old crib of a place, though."

"Yes, it is pretty bad," Ben hastened to answer, though until that moment he had thought the X——

quarters about as comfortable as they could be made. "We have hard work to put up with them, and shall probably build a club-house of our own before next year. I suppose your quarters on the English Thames are very fine, Mr.—I mean Lord Steerem?"

"Aw, yes. Each crew there has a castle to itself, you know. But, I say,"—here his lordship carefully adjusted a single eye-glass, making an awful face in his efforts to keep it from dropping off—"what a beastly queer go that is, don't you know!"

He had stopped and was staring at the notice over the front gate.

"You don't mean to tell me that those cads from the noospapers actually try to force their way in here?"

"Oh, yes, we are bothered to death with them," replied Ben. "Don't you find the same trouble on the other side?"

"Aw, no. We keep a lot of bobbies on hand, and any noospaper fellah would be arrested at once if he came anywhere near the quarters. It would make the whole thing too beastly common, don't you know, if we should let 'em find out every thing about us before the race."

Ben was somewhat staggered by this; but of course his lordship must know what he was talking about, so he only said: "I wish we could do the same over here," at the same time knowing very well that he did not wish any such thing.

Lord Steerem was shown all over the quarters; he inspected the racing-shells in the boat-house, was introduced to the other fellows, some of whom did not seem to think so much of the honor as did Ben Watkins, and finally expressed a desire to see the crew take a short spin on the river, that he might compare American with the English style of rowing.

This request was of course granted, and when the shell was in the water and the men had taken their places, Captain Watkins asked as a great favor that the famous coxswain would go with them and steer.

"Aw, yes, with pleasure," replied his lordship. "Am a little rusty, of course, but I may be able to give you a pointer or two, don't you know!"

The crew did not think that the imported coxswain steered as well as their own, who had been left behind. He also found so much fault with the boat, and criticised their manner of rowing so sharply,

that the spin was cut short, and within ten minutes they were back at the float.

All this time the press-boat had hovered near, and its passengers had taken full notes of these proceedings for the long articles they intended to write concerning them. It seemed to Myles Manning that the noble coxswain was an awful duffer at the business of steering a racing-shell. He wished Billings were there to enjoy the performance with him; but he held his tongue and saw all that he could.

Lord Steerem noticed the curiosity that his appearance seemed to excite on the press-boat, and he now asked who those "fellahs" were.

"Oh, they are only a lot of reporters," answered Ben Watkins, carelessly. In his heart he was glad enough to feel that the press of the whole country was certain to be informed of the honors being showered upon him and his crew by this visit of a foreign nobleman.

"Aw, by the way!" exclaimed his lordship, with a sudden effort of memory, "where 's Manning? I heard before I left the other side that your captain's name was Manning, don't you know!"

"Manning? Oh, he has left college, and gone

on some paper or other as a reporter," answered Ben Watkins. "I should n't wonder if he was out there on that boat now," he added, with the expectation that his lordship would be so disgusted at this intelligence as to take no further interest in Manning.

To his amazement Lord Steerem expressed great pleasure at learning that the person for whom he had inquired was so near at hand. He even went so far as to say that, from all he had heard on the other side, he believed Manning to be the only man in this country who really knew how to row. Then, declaring that their late captain was the person of all others whom he particularly wished to meet, he bade his entertainers a curt farewell, and, springing aboard his launch, ordered the captain to run out to the press-boat.

As this craft was but a short distance from the X—— float, a few turns of the screw sent the launch alongside of her, and its captain inquired if a gentleman named Manning was on board.

When Myles was pointed out to him he presented Lord Steerem's compliments and asked if Mr. Manning would kindly come on board the launch for a few minutes, as his lordship had something of importance to communicate to him in private.

Greatly wondering at this, and not at all desiring to meet Lord Steerem, but thinking that he might possibly obtain some facts of interest for his paper by so doing, Myles complied with this request.

In the meanwhile the other reporters were gazing eagerly at the launch, noting the trim appearance of her crew, and trying to get a good look at Lord Steerem, who was partially concealed within the little pilot-house.

The moment Myles stepped on board the dainty craft she was cast loose from the press-boat, and as she began to move ahead at full speed her colors were hauled down. A moment later an American yacht ensign was run up on the after jack-staff, while from the one at the bow a broad silken banner inscribed in large golden letters, *The Phonograph*, was flung to the evening breeze. This name also appeared, as if by magic, on the black ribbons that encircled the new straw hats of the crew. At the same instant Lord Steerem stepped from the pilot-house, and, snatching the dark mustache from his face, exclaimed in the well-known voice of Billings, the *Phonograph* reporter:

"Good-bye! Ta-ta! Must be off to the other side, don't you know!"

An angry yell, a howl of derision, and finally a hearty cheer, burst from the reporters on the press-boat as they realized the abominable hoax of which they were the victims. On the float, from which Ben Watkins and his men also witnessed and fully comprehended the whole scene, a dead silence reigned. Their mortification was too great to find a fitting expression just at that moment, and it was probably on account of it that they lost the race the next day—for lose it they did by a boat's length.

As for Myles, his astonishment was only equalled by his admiration for Billings' genius and the admirable self-possession with which he acted his part. He heartily congratulated his companion as they sped down the placid river, followed by the clumsy press-boat and its shouting passengers.

"Lord Steerem," as he was called for many days, had no difficulty in obtaining the forgiveness of his fellow-reporters, for they were only too glad that one of their number had thus got even with the ungentlemanly captain of the X—— College crew.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ACT OF FOLLY AND A CRUEL DISPATCH.

THE ridicule that he had to endure on account of "Lord Steerem," combined with the mortification of losing the boat-race, was more than Ben Watkins could endure. He was heard to declare at the beginning of the long vacation that he should never return to X—— College again; and as for boat-racing, he had had enough of it to last the rest of his life. Then he disappeared, but where he went or what became of him none of his recent companions either knew or cared. They had had quite enough of Ben Watkins, with his mean disposition and overbearing ways, and were quite willing to lose sight of him.

As the summer wore on Myles Manning steadily increased his list of friends. His fellow-reporters on the *Phonograph* liked him because he was good-natured, obliging, and of a happy disposition. Those

on the other papers liked him because, while he was keen in pursuit of news and would use every honest method to obtain a "beat" on them, he never forgot that he was a gentleman or descended to dishonorable means to accomplish his purpose. Mr. Haxall liked him because he did not shirk his work nor show the slightest disinclination to accept any assignment, no matter how unpleasant its nature.

When Van Cleef was given the enviable summer job of visiting the principal watering-places and resorts of the country, for the purpose of writing letters from them to the paper, Myles was assigned to his night station-work. He particularly hated this, but he attended to it as well and thoroughly as though he had chosen it, and only Mr. Haxall suspected, from a chance remark, how distasteful it was to him.

He studied the best models of newspaper-writing carefully, and before the summer was over developed an easy and pleasant style of his own. He was becoming recognized on the paper as a valuable man, but his salary still continued to be what it was at the first, and there was no intimation that it would ever be raised. The boy tried to send five dollars of

it home every week, for family affairs were becoming worse and more discouraging with each day, but he found it very hard to keep up his neat personal appearance and also pay his weekly board-bills with the small sum that remained.

It would seem from all this that our hero must be a paragon of virtue; and, as some of those who have followed his fortunes thus far would say, "Altogether too good to live." If this were the case this story might as well end right here, leaving the reader to imagine how Myles rose from one position to another until he finally became proprietor of the great paper on which he was now but one of the humblest workers. That it does not thus end was because the young reporter was possessed of two grave faults, either one of which, if unchecked, would eventually lead him to disgrace and ruin. He was in danger of becoming both a drunkard and a gambler.

Myles would have been terribly shocked if any one had said this to him, and would have indignantly denied it. At the same time he could not have denied that he was fond of all sorts of games of chance, nor that he rarely refused an offered glass

of wine. He had fallen into the habit of drinking, now and then, while in college, because he was too good-natured to refuse an offered "treat," and too generous not to "stand treat" in turn. Now, as a reporter, he found the temptation to do these same things increased a hundred-fold. It seemed as though almost every assignment on which he was sent led to accepting or offering drinks of some kind of liquor. He began to think that the gaining of interesting items of news depended largely upon his willingness to "stand treat" for, or be "treated" by, those from whom he sought it. Several times he had returned to the office flushed and noisy with wine, and once or twice Mr. Haxall's keen eye had detected him in this condition. It was for this reason that the city editor had decided to wait a little longer and test him a little further before advancing his salary. He liked the young fellow and was watching him anxiously. He even went so far as to warn him of the dangers and temptations that beset a reporter's path, though he did not make his allusions personal.

Thus matters stood with Myles Manning when one day, toward the end of September, Mr. Haxall called him to his desk and said,

"Mr. Manning, it now looks as though the most general and serious railroad strike this country has ever seen were about to break out. If it does it will be a very different thing from the horse-car strike in which you received your first lessons at reporting. That was only a local affair, while this will be of interest to the whole country. Of course the *Phonograph* wants the earliest news of it, and I am sending out half a dozen of our best reporters to important railroad points that seem likely to become centres from which the strikers will operate. At these points we must have our steadiest and most reliable men, of whom I count you as one. You will, therefore, start at once for Mountain Junction, the terminus of the Central and Western Divisions of the A. & B. Road. Send us full dispatches of all that happens, and remain there until relieved or recalled. Here is an order on the cashier for your expenses, and if you find yourself in need of more money you can telegraph for it. Remember that the *Phonograph* expects to receive the news—and all the news—from its reporters, but that it has no use for their individual opinions. Those are formed for it by its editors."

With the promptness that Mr. Haxall liked so

well Myles answered, "All right, sir. I think I understand," left the office at once, and the next train westward bound over the A. & B. Road carried him as a passenger.

As Mr. Haxall turned again to his desk, after having started Myles on this important and perhaps dangerous mission, he said to himself:

"I hope I have done right to trust him with this job. He is entitled to at least one fair trial on big work and a chance for himself outside the city. At any rate we can't get badly beaten whatever happens, for Rolfe, in Chicago, is certain to get hold of any thing important from the Junction and send it in on chance."

Mountain Junction was a railroad town in every sense of the word. Here the main line of the A. & B. Road was met by an important branch, and here were located its car-shops, locomotive-works, and general repair-shops. It was in a coal and iron region, and several large mines were in operation not far from it. Its entire population, therefore, consisted of the families of railroad employés and miners. During the daytime it was a scene of busy industry and the air was filled with the crash of

steam-hammers, the shriek of locomotive-whistles, and the rattle of trains. At night the noise was hardly diminished, while the sky was reddened by the glow from hundreds of furnaces, foundries, and coke-ovens.

The place did not look attractive to Myles, as, late in the afternoon, he surveyed what he could of it from the platform of the railway station at which the New York train had just dropped him, and he hoped he should not be kept there long.

He found a more comfortable hotel than he expected, and in it, after thoroughly cleansing himself from the dust and cinders of his long ride, he went down to supper. The seats at two long tables, extending the whole length of the room, were filled with the bosses and heads of departments of the many shops, mills, and foundries of the place. A chair had been reserved for him at a small table placed by a window, at which two persons were already busily eating. One of these uttered an exclamation of surprise as Myles entered the room, and, looking at him, the reporter saw his old rival, Ben Watkins.

"Well, of all things!" cried Ben. "What brings you here, Myles Manning?"

"Business," answered Myles. "But I suppose you are here for health and pleasure."

"Not much I ain't," growled Ben. "I am here to make my living. My uncle is superintendent of the Western Division A. & B. Road, and I am his valuable assistant."

Although Myles had no love for Ben Watkins, especially as he recalled the nature of their last interview, he did not wholly dislike him, and, after all, it was pleasant to meet an acquaintance in a place where he expected to find only strangers.

Ben introduced the other occupant of the table, a supercilious-looking, pale-faced little man in uniform, as Lieutenant Easter. He belonged to a company of country militia, sent to this point from a neighboring town to be on hand in case of any serious emergency, and to his own intense satisfaction found himself, owing to the enforced absence of his captain, in command of the troops.

Ben Watkins ridiculed the precaution thus taken, and in answer to a question from Myles declared that he did not believe there would be any strike, in spite of all the talk. The lieutenant agreed with him, and, caressing his silky little mustache, said,

with an absurdly pompous tone, that the mere presence of himself and his men was sufficient to prevent any such thing.

After supper Ben, who had displayed an unusual friendliness toward Myles ever since their meeting, asked him how he intended to spend the evening.

"I must go out and find the telegraph office," replied Myles, "and make arrangements to have my dispatches sent through promptly. Then I thought I would look about the town a little."

"Oh, well," said Ben, "that won't take you long, and when you come back you 'd better drop into my room, No. 16. There is n't any thing to do of an evening in this beastly place, but a few of us generally manage to put in the time somehow, and perhaps we can make it pleasant for you. Come and see, at any rate."

Myles promised he would, and after receiving directions how to reach the telegraph office he went out.

A wickedly cruel expression swept over Ben Watkins' face as he watched his recent rival out of sight.

"I 'll fix you, my young man. See if I don't! I have n't forgotten 'Lord Steerem' and the trick you

played on me. If I don't get even with you this very night I will before long. Oh, yes, Ben Watkins does n't forget in a hurry."

Myles, on the other hand, as he walked down the street, was thinking.

"Ben does n't seem half a bad fellow, after all. He has decidedly changed for the better since last June, and I should n't wonder if he proved a great help to me in this place."

He found the telegraph operator to be a brisk, wide-awake young man, who said he was ready to handle any amount of press matter, and who also promised to send word to Myles if any thing important took place during the night.

Leaving the office Myles started toward the railway station, which was only a block farther on, to assure himself that every thing about it was still quiet. As he reached its broad platform he noticed there a child four or five years old, and wondered what such a little thing could be doing all alone in such a place at that hour, for it was now about eight o'clock. Stepping up to the child he asked:

"Well, little one, what is your name?"

"My name Bobby," replied the child, gravely,

lifting a roguish but self-possessed little face to look at the tall young fellow bending over him.

As the light from a reflector hung outside the station fell on it, Myles thought he had never seen a sweeter or more winning face on a child, and he at once became greatly interested in the little fellow.

"Well, Bobby, where do you live?" he asked.

"Over there." And the child pointed vaguely into the darkness behind them.

"But what are you doing out here so late, and all alone? Don't you know it is high time for all good little boys to be in bed?"

"I 's waiting for my papa."

"Who is your papa?"

"Why, my papa is my papa," answered the child, with an air of surprise that any one should ask such a question.

"Well, where is your papa, then?" asked Myles, looking about with the expectation of seeing a papa at no great distance.

"My papa is on the chu-chu cars."

"The chu-chu cars?"

"Yes, over there."

Here the child pointed to a freight train that had

just hauled in on a siding beyond the tracks of the main line. Then crying out, "I see my papa," the child jumped from the platform, and, before Myles could stop him, was running across the tracks toward a twinkling lantern that was approaching from the direction of the freight train.

All at once, with a cry of pain, the child fell directly across one of the glistening lines of steel.

Myles sprang toward him. As he did so the east-bound night express dashed, with a shriek and a roar, out from behind a round-house that had, until that moment, concealed it, and rushed with fiery breath and gleaming head-light toward where the child lay.

Myles' heart ceased its beating, but he did not hesitate nor flinch, though it seemed impossible that he could get there before the iron monster. He did, though, with a second to spare, and snatched the child as he ran. The little foot was caught in the angle of a switch and the child uttered a sharp scream of pain as the strong young arms tore it away, leaving a tiny shoe behind. Both rolled together in the cinders, barely beyond reach of the cruel wheels that ground over the quivering rails.

With a long wild howl, as of baffled rage, the night express swept on, leaving Myles and the child almost suffocated in its dust, and breathless with the rush of wind that followed it.

As Myles staggered to his feet, and lifted the limp form of the child whom he had saved at so imminent a risk of his own life, a man with a lantern on his arm sprang forward, and snatching the child from him, cried, in a tone of agony :

" It 's my boy ! My only boy ! My little Bob— and he 's killed ! The last one ; and he had to be taken too ! Oh, it 's too hard, too hard ! "

While Myles was trying to soothe him, the child, who was more frightened than hurt, put up a little hand, and, patting its father's face, said :

"Bobby was coming to you, papa, but he fell down and got hurted. His foot hurts now."

The father was Jacob Allen, one of the best-known men on the A. & B. road. He had just come in, as he did every other night at the same hour, in charge of a through freight train. At this point he was relieved, and could spend every other night in his home near the station. His wife and little Bob were in the habit of coming as far as

the platform to meet him. But this evening Mrs. Allen was detained at home, and the child had slipped away alone unnoticed.

Great tears rolled down the man's begrimed and weather-beaten cheeks as he tried to thank Myles for what he had done, and to tell him how dark and cheerless his home would be without its bit of golden-haired sunlight.

Myles made light of his service and escaped from the other's overpowering gratitude as soon as possible, promising to call and see the child, and find out how he was getting along, on the morrow. Before he left the man had learned his name, and the last words he heard were:

"If ever the time comes when Jake Allen can lift a hand for you, or say a word that will in any way serve you, Mr. Manning, you may count on his doing it, so long as he has breath left in his body. And who knows but the time may come sooner than you think!" he added significantly.

As Myles, hot, bruised, and covered with dust and cinders, re-entered the hotel almost the first person he met was Ben Watkins, who exclaimed in astonishment at his appearance. Myles told him in a few

words what had happened, and, pushing him into a chair, Ben said:

"Wait there a minute, old man, and I 'll fix you all right."

He returned quickly, bringing a great tumbler of something that foamed and sparkled and tinkled with cool bits of ice. Without asking or caring what it was Myles thirstily drained the glass saying:

"That 's the very thing I wanted, and it was awfully good of you to think of it, Ben."

"Oh, that 's all right," replied Watkins. "Come up to my room and have another as soon as you get dusted off."

Myles went to No. 16, where he found that Ben and Lieutenant Easter were playing cards. There he drank another glass of the cool, pleasant mixture that was "just the thing he wanted." It made him feel so good that he was easily persuaded to take a third. "It is as mild as milk," Ben said, "and would n't upset a baby."

Then he winked at his companion, who looked at Myles and winked back at Ben.

Myles now began to talk loud and boastfully. Then he joined in a game of cards and began to lose

money and say that it was no matter, for there was plenty more where that came from. All the while Ben Watkins, with an evil smile on his face, kept urging him to take a sip of this or a taste of that; and after a time, when his money was nearly gone and he could no longer keep awake, they carried him to his own room and put him to bed.

The breathless messenger who came at midnight from the telegraph office to tell Myles that the great strike had begun failed to arouse him. The young reporter knew nothing of the exciting scenes taking place in the streets of the lawless town. Of all the important events, for news of which his paper depended upon him, he sent no dispatch.

Somebody, however, did send a dispatch that night to the *Phonograph*, and it was:

"Your reporter at Mountain Junction too drunk to send any news. Better replace him with a sober man."

CHAPTER X.

MYLES MAKES A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

THE cruel dispatch to the *Phonograph*, written for the express purpose of ruining Myles Manning, was the last one to go eastward that night. When the operator—much against his will, for he had taken a fancy to Myles, but compelled by the rules of his office to do so—had sent it flashing over the wires and received an "O. K." in answer, his hand lay listlessly on the key for a full minute. He was thinking what a mean, contemptible thing had just been done, and was wondering if in any way he could undo it or avert its consequences. Yes, he believed something could be done! At any rate, he would try. The frank, pleasant face of the young reporter rose up before him. A fellow with such a face as that must be all right. He would at least take the responsibility of telling the *Phonograph* people that he was, and that that last dispatch was

false. The key began to click beneath his nimble fingers, but its sound was faint and lifeless. The New York wire would not work. Quickly changing the connections on his switch-board the operator tried again, but with the same result. None of the eastern wires would work. Within that minute of hesitation they had all been cut.

Then a rush of business came in that had to be sent west to Chicago. The Associated Press agent got off a few hundred hurriedly written words announcing the beginning of the great strike. Two or three important private messages were put through, and then the western wires also ceased to work. Mountain Junction was cut off from telegraphic communication with the world.

Outside the office crowds of railroad men filled the streets. Some of them were noisy, others quiet and determined. Some of them uttered loud boasts and threats, others worked with the silent energy of those who have decided upon their plans and mean to carry them through. All trains arriving after midnight were side-tracked. Their locomotives were run into the round-house, where their fires were drawn. Heavy barricades were placed across

the main line, the signal-lights were extinguished, and all traffic was effectually stopped.

When, late the next morning, Myles Manning awoke, it was with an aching head and a confused idea of where he was and what had happened to him. The town seemed strangely silent as compared with its noise and bustle of the day before. Could it be Sunday? No, Myles was certain that the preceding day had been Tuesday. What time was it? He pulled out his watch, and as he did so made the discovery that the roll of bills with which he was to have paid his expenses had disappeared. For a moment he thought he had been robbed. Then a dim memory of playing cards and losing money the evening before struggled into his mind, and the cruel nature of his situation began to dawn upon him. What had he done? What had he left undone? In his despair the poor boy sat down on the edge of his bed, and, burying his face in his hands, groaned aloud.

He was aroused by a knock, but before he could reply to it the door opened and Ben Watkins walked in.

"Hello, Manning!" he exclaimed. "What 's the

matter? Why are n't you out gathering in the items of interest that you reporters are always hunting for? There are dead loads of them floating round this place at present, I can tell you."

"Oh, Ben," groaned Myles, hoping for a bit of sympathy in his distress, "my money is all gone except a dollar or two in change. I must have lost it at cards in your room last night; but I can't exactly remember. What shall I do?"

"Do? Why, brace up! You 'll get it all back again next time. I got pretty well cleaned out myself last night, but we 'll get even with that fellow yet. He 's got to stay here until the strike is over, and we 'll have no end of chances at him."

"The strike!" echoed Myles, to whose thoughts the words gave a new direction. "Has the strike begun?"

"Well, I should say it had, and is well under way by this time. Why, it began at twelve o'clock last night. We had a big riot, but things are quieting down now, and both sides are awaiting developments."

"And I have n't sent a word of it to the paper!" exclaimed Myles, aghast at the thought of his neglected duty.

"Of course not. How could you, when all the telegraph wires were cut the first thing?"

"Were they, really?" asked Myles, in a slightly relieved tone. "So that I could n't have sent any thing, any way?"

"To be sure they were. Nobody was able to send off even a whisper. So you may rest easy on that score."

This news lightened poor Myles' burden of anxiety somewhat, though it did not lessen the force of his self-reproach. Perhaps this, his first serious neglect of duty, would never be known in the office, after all. At the same time Myles vowed that such a thing should never happen again.

After bathing his face in cold water he started out with Ben to study the situation. As they passed the hotel bar-room the latter suggested that they step in and take a "bracer."

"No, I thank you," said Myles, resolutely. "No more 'bracers' for me. After last night I am willing to pledge myself never to touch another drop so long as I live."

"Oh, pshaw!" replied Ben. "Last night was nothing."

"Perhaps not, as you look at it, but if my last night's condition and its results were known in the *Phonograph* office it would prove a very important something to me. They have no use there for a fellow who lets liquor get the best of him."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Ben. "Don't try to make out that your own office is any better than any other. All newspaper men get drunk every now and then; everybody knows that."

"Look here, Ben Watkins!" cried Myles, stopping short and turning upon his companion, while an angry flush mounted to his face, "you may be speaking from ignorance, and I hope you are. At any rate, I want you to understand that what you have just said is not true. I know a good deal more about newspaper men than you do. As a rule, they are gentlemen, from editors-in-chief down to reporters, and no drunkard can ever lay rightful claim to that title."

"Oh, they can't, can't they?" remarked Ben, sneeringly. "Yet I suppose you consider yourself a gentleman."

"I try to be one," answered Myles, hot with indignation at the other's significant tone and words.

"And hereafter I mean to associate only with those who are."

So saying he turned and walked rapidly away, leaving Ben to stare after him with such an expression of intense hatred on his face as startled the passers-by who chanced to notice it.

Ben Watkins was a bad fellow. There was no doubt of that. Some people, and Myles Manning among them, suspected it, but nobody knew how bad he really was nor what evil he was capable of. As has already been shown, he could cherish a spirit of petty revenge, and would descend to any means to gratify it. In addition to this he was dishonest and recklessly extravagant. Although he had occupied his present position but a few months, he had managed to run into debt for one thing or another to a good many people. Some of these debts he had been obliged to pay, and, as his salary was not sufficient to meet them, he had appropriated to his own use several small sums of railroad money with which he had been intrusted, and altered the figures of his accounts to conceal the thefts. He hoped to win enough at cards to make good these sums before their loss should be discovered; but of

late luck had been against him, and he had only succeeded in plunging more deeply than ever into debt. At the outbreak of the great strike his situation was so desperate that he had almost made up his mind to disappear from that part of the country and make a new start where he was unknown.

He dared not confide in or ask aid of his uncle, for the division superintendent was a stern man, with no sympathy or pity for evil-doers, especially those whose sin was that of dishonesty. He was absent from Mountain Junction when the strike broke out, attending a meeting of officers of the road, held in a distant city, and, as his assistant, Ben Watkins was left in charge of the office.

On the day of his uncle's departure, Ben had received, and receipted for, an express package containing a thousand dollars of railroad money, which he placed in the office safe to await the superintendent's return. As he put this package away he looked longingly at it and wished it were for him. How nicely it would help him out of his troubles! Still he dared not even open it, and with a reluctant sigh he laid it down and closed the heavy safe door upon it.

He had thought of this package more than once since then, and even opened the safe several times to see if it were really there. Now, as, after parting from Myles, he sat at his uncle's desk in the inner office, wondering if there was any way by which he could turn this strike to his own advantage, something happened that suited him exactly.

As his uncle's representative he was visited by a committee of four from the strikers—a conductor, an engineer, a stoker, and a brakeman. Of this committee conductor Jacob Allen was spokesman. He stated the cause of the strike very clearly, and promised that the men should use no violence so long as none was used against them. They were willing to await quietly the action of the company, but there was one matter that ought to be seen to at once lest it lead to trouble. Many of the strikers in Mountain Junction occupied houses near the shops and works belonging to the railroad. They were obliged to pass close by these buildings in going to and from their houses. Several of them had been ordered to keep at a greater distance by the soldiers guarding the works. It would put them to great inconvenience to be obliged to take other roads, and

this committee hoped Mr. Watkins would issue orders that they should pass unmolested, even close to the buildings, so long as they did so quietly and peaceably.

The assistant division superintendent listened impatiently to all the committee had to say, and then with an air intended to impress them with the importance of his position, he answered,

"I have already issued orders that no striker is to be allowed within a hundred feet of any works or shop belonging to this company and under my charge. If you do not want to be inconvenienced come in and report for duty. Until you do so the order will be enforced."

"I am afraid it will make trouble, Mr. Watkins," said Allen.

"That is your affair and not mine," was the reply. "You must take the consequences of your own acts."

Disgusted with the manner and words of the self-important young man the committee withdrew, and the bitterness of feeling on both sides was from that moment greatly increased. As a result of Ben's refusal to grant this modest and reasonable request several slight encounters took place between the sol-

AS HE WAS STOOPING TO SET FIRE TO THE READY FUEL, THE SOUND OF HIS OWN NAME CAUSED HIM TO DROP THE MATCH. (*Page* 151.)

diers and strikers during the day, and by nightfall a sense of uneasiness and fears of more serious trouble overspread the whole town.

Ben Watkins watched all this with great satisfaction. It was exactly what he had hoped for, and he neglected no opportunity of making matters worse by word or action.

It was after ten o'clock that night when he stood before the safe in his uncle's private office, prepared to commit an act at once bold and wicked. He had entered the building as stealthily as a burglar, taking many precautions to avoid being seen. Now, with trembling hands, he unlocked the great safe, and, securing the coveted express package, thrust it into a breast-pocket of his coat. He next pulled the books and papers from the safe and scattered them about the floor. Then, pouring the contents of a can of kerosene over a pile of newspapers and other inflammable matter in one corner of the room, he struck a match. As he was stooping to set fire to the ready fuel the sound of his own name, uttered in a loud voice from the door-way, caused him to drop the match and spring to his feet, trembling with the terror of detected guilt. He had been working

by the dim light of a single lamp, and was so intent upon what he was about that he had not heard a step on the stair-way nor the door of the outer office open. Now, as he turned a face bloodless with fear in the direction of the voice and saw Myles Manning standing in the door-way, he uttered an inarticulate cry of rage and sprang toward him.

Myles had been busily collecting news of the strike all that day and writing a report of it, in the hope that he might find some chance to get it through. He visited the telegraph office several times to inquire if the wires were not yet repaired, but each time his friend, the operator, who remained faithfully at his post, shook his head in the negative. The operator was anxious to befriend one to whom he had taken a liking, and who, as he knew, had suffered a great wrong, regarding which his duty obliged him to remain silent; but during the day he could discover no way of helping him. At last, late in the evening, when Myles had given up all hopes of getting a dispatch through and was about to retire, the operator called for him at the hotel.

He said he had just learned, as a secret, from

a friend among the strikers, that the wires were cut between the town and the first station on the railroad to the east. The strikers were in possession of that office, and from it were sending dispatches to other points along the line. He had told this friend, who possessed great influence over his fellows, that there was a reporter in town who was most anxious to communicate with his paper, and asked permission for him to do so from this little station. At first it was refused. Then the striker asked the reporter's name. On being told that it was Manning, and that he was from the *Phonograph*, he said that made all the difference in the world. They would willingly allow a *Phonograph* reporter the use of the wire whenever he wanted it; for that paper had always given the strikers a fair showing in its columns. He only made the conditions that no other reporter should be allowed the use of the wire, and that nothing should be forwarded over it except the message to the *Phonograph*.

This the operator had promised, also agreeing to go with the reporter and send the message through himself.

Myles was of course most eager to avail himself of

this privilege, and, heartily thanking the operator, was about to order a carriage in which they might drive to the little station. His friend, however, said that the wagon-roads of that mountainous region were so rough and roundabout that to drive there would take several hours, while if they only had a hand-car they might reach the place in less than an hour, as the railroad was down grade nearly all the way. But all the hand-cars were locked up in one of the shops, and nobody but the division superintendent or the person acting in his place could authorize one to be taken out.

Myles would rather have asked a favor from almost anybody else just then; but, as one "under orders," it was clearly his duty to use every effort to carry them out, and he at once began his search for Ben Watkins. They went to his room and looked through the hotel in vain. Then the operator suggested that Mr. Watkins might be in his office, and said that if Myles would go there and see he would look in one or two other likely places, and they would meet at the railway station. So they separated, and Myles hurried in the direction of the superintendent's office.

Just before reaching it he met a man whom the light from an open window showed him to be his acquaintance of the evening before, conductor Jacob Allen. He apologized, with the plea of having been very busy, for not calling to see how little Bob was doing, and asked Allen if he had seen any thing of the assistant superintendent that evening.

"Yes, I saw him go into that building and up stairs to his office a while ago, though he had no idea I was watching him," was the answer. "You know these are curious times, Mr. Manning, and some have to watch while others have to be watched. By the way, would you mind stepping in here where there is a light? I'd like to give you a bit of writing that may come handy to you some time."

Myles said he was in a great hurry just at that moment, but if Allen could wait until he had spoken with Mr. Watkins he would be right back.

The conductor expressed his willingness to wait, and Myles, hurrying to the railway building, sprang lightly up the stair-way leading to the superintendent's office. He opened the outer door, and, seeing a light in the inner room, stepped toward it. Ben was in the act of emptying the can of kerosene

upon the pile of inflammable material, and Myles hesitated a moment in amazement at the sight.

Then a match was struck, and the full meaning of what was about to be done flashed, with its sputtering glare, across the mind of the young reporter. He gave a cry of "Ben Watkins! what are you doing?" and rushed towards him determined to prevent the crime which seemed about to be committed. At the sound of his voice Watkins turned upon Myles in a frenzy of fear and hate.

CHAPTER XI.

A FIGHT AND A MISTAKE.

MYLES MANNING hated to fight. He considered it a low and ungentlemanly thing to do. Rather than maintain his rights by brute force he would submit to a very considerable degree of wrong; and he did not believe that either fighting or submission was necessary in the majority of cases. It seemed to him that any man or boy having control of his own temper could, by keeping cool and talking the matter over quietly, control that of his enemy. Still there are cases in which it becomes absolutely necessary to exert one's strength, and one of them is when a person is attacked by a madman. This was Myles' position as Ben Watkins sprang at him when detected in the act of setting fire to the railroad building—an act that he thought would be laid to the strikers.

He had been in such a state of guilty terror for the preceding half hour that his nerves were wholly unstrung. Thus, when his guilt was discovered, and that by a person whom he had deeply wronged, and therefore hated, he lost all control of himself, and, springing at Myles like a madman, attacked him with all the fury of one.

For a moment the young reporter was staggered by the suddenness and force of this unexpected attack, and only partially warded a stunning blow aimed full at his face. Then he rallied, and, with the skill for which he had been famous among the athletes in the X—— gymnasium, coolly defended himself. Ben was the stronger of the two, but Myles was much the more skilful and well trained in all manly exercises. He was thus perfectly well able to protect himself from the other's furious blows. At length, seeming to realize this, Ben changed his tactics, and, breaking through the reporter's guard by a fierce rush, clinched with and tried to throw him. Now Myles was indeed in danger, and every muscle of his athletic young frame was strained to the utmost. As the two swayed and tugged in their desperate struggle they staggered

from side to side of the office, overturning chairs and tables in their course. The one lighted lamp went to the floor with a crash, and they struggled in utter darkness.

Myles felt that he was becoming exhausted. The fierce hot breath of his adversary seemed to poison him and take away his own. He began to fear that his very life was in danger from the madman with whom he wrestled. He must not yield. He could not. He had too much at stake. He braced himself for one last tremendous effort. For a moment he did not breathe. His teeth were set. The veins of his forehead swelled almost to bursting. His muscles became rigid as whip-cords. His opponent gave way slightly, and the next instant they both fell heavily to the floor, but Myles was on top. He knelt on the form of his prostrate rival and held his arms down with a fierce grasp, beneath which the other lay utterly powerless and helpless. For a full minute no word passed between them. Each was regaining his breath with panting gasps.

At length Myles said:

"Ben Watkins, we have been rivals for a long time; but this is our first fight, and, I hope, our last.

Although I would willingly have avoided it I am glad it has come off. I hope you realize that you are whipped. I hope you also realize that the chance which sent me here has saved you from committing a State prison offence. I cannot imagine your object in attempting to set fire to this building, for that is what you most certainly were doing as I entered that door. It looks as though you had some good reason for wishing to destroy the contents of that safe, and thought you could do it in such a way that the blame would be laid upon the strikers. I don't know what those books and papers are, but they must be of value to the company. It is evident that you are not fit to be trusted with them. Now, if you choose to put them all back where they belong, lock the safe, and give me the key to keep until your uncle or some other officer of the road arrives, I will then return it to you, and no one need ever know that it has been out of your possession. As I have no wish to see an old class-mate disgraced I will also agree to say nothing of this night's work so long as you behave yourself. I want you to remember, though, that I can do so at any time, and that you are thus to a certain extent in my power.

Still we are alone, there are no witnesses of what has happened, and I give you my word that I will never open my lips upon the subject unless you force me to. There is one thing more," he added, suddenly remembering the errand on which he had come: "I want you to order out a hand-car for my immediate use, and let it be at the station inside of fifteen minutes."

Ben sullenly agreed to these terms and was released from his humiliating position. Another lamp was lighted, the books and papers were returned to the safe, it was locked, and the key was handed to Myles. Then, leaving Ben to restore the office to order and to remove as far as possible all traces of their recent struggle, Myles started to keep his appointment with Jacob Allen, and to return to the hotel, where he had left his report for the *Phonograph*.

Allen was waiting just where he left him, and apparently had not moved from the spot or even changed his position during the reporter's absence. He held out a bit of folded letter-paper as Myles drew near, saying:

"Here is a little note that I have just written for you, Mr. Manning. It may be of use to you in case

you should ever get into any difficulty with the boys. Even if you never have to use it, it will serve to remind you that Jacob Allen will never forget what you did for him last evening, and will count it a piece of good luck if he ever gets a chance to do you a good turn in part payment of what he owes you."

Myles thanked him for his thoughtfulness, thrust the note into a pocket, bade Allen good-night, and hurried on.

At the hotel he spent a few minutes in his room, got his report and writing materials, and then going to the office told the proprietor that he should probably be out all night and perhaps part of the next day.

"Very well, Mr. Manning," replied the landlord, "but as these are troubled times, and you don't leave any baggage to amount to any thing behind you, I shall have to ask for the amount of your bill to date before you go. It is—let me see—yes, five dollars will square us up to breakfast-time to-morrow morning."

What was to be done? Myles had not two dollars in his possession, nor had he a friend within reach from whom to borrow. He hesitated, grew red in the face, stammered and finally said:

"Your demand is rather unexpected, sir, and finds me without funds to meet it just at this moment. I was going to telegraph to my paper for money as soon as the wires were in order. I am certainly coming back here again. You don't suppose I would run away for a five-dollar hotel-bill, do you?"

"Oh, no, of course not," replied the landlord. "I don't suppose any thing of the kind, and I don't doubt but that you mean to come back. Still, folks have cleared out forgetting to pay smaller bills than that, and when a man once leaves town there 's no telling what may happen to prevent his return. Your being broke, as you say you are, is unfortunate; but it won't make any difference if you can leave something as security until your return—your watch, for instance."

Without another word Myles pulled his gold watch, a birthday gift from his father the year he entered college, from his pocket, handed it to the landlord, received a receipt for it, and hurried into the street, hot with indignation and mortification.

He found the hand-car standing on the track in front of the railway station, and beside it the operator awaiting his coming with the greatest

impatience, for it was an hour since they had separated.

"Where have you been and what have you been doing all this time?" he asked. "I had nearly given you up, and was going home, when a fellow brought this car along with word from Mr. Watkins that it was for your use. Then I knew things were moving all right. But what has kept you so long?"

"Some unexpected business," answered Myles, evasively, as they jumped on the car, and, hanging a lantern in the forward end, began to turn the cranks that set it in motion. Myles' thoughts were still too unpleasant and too full of his recent mortification for him to care to talk, and he found relief in the active exertion necessary to propel the car. It furnished an ample excuse for silence, but his companion wondered at the tremendous energy with which he toiled.

They rolled quickly out of the railroad yard, and in a few minutes were beyond the limits of the town. Faster and faster they flew over the ringing lines of steel. Now they roared like a train of cars through a stretch of dark forest, then they skirted the base of a tall mountain, and again skimmed the

edge of some deep valley lying black and mysterious far beneath them. They sped round sharp curves, rattled noisily over bridges that spanned swift rushing streams, rumbled over the hollow arches of culverts, and every now and then plunged through the breathless blackness of echoing tunnels. As they were on a down grade their speed increased with each turn of the cranks, until they seemed fairly to fly, and the wind of the their own progress nearly took away their breath as it whistled keenly past them.

Occasionally they caught the gleam of a charcoal-burner's fire, sometimes close beside the track and again far up on a mountain-side or glowing like an angry eye from the depths of a ragged ravine; but these vanished almost as soon as seen. Once they were stopped by a red light swung furiously across the track but a short distance ahead of them. Somebody was waving the danger signal, and their iron-shod brake was applied so vigorously that a train of sparks flew hissing from it. As they came to a standstill two rough-looking fellows stepped within the circle of light thrown by their lantern and demanded to know who they were and what was

their business. They were members of a guard posted by the strikers to see that no one left or entered Mountain Junction during the night.

"Hello, Ned! is that you?" said the operator, recognizing one of them. "We are all right. You know me, don't you? I 'm only going to Station No. 1 to send a dispatch for this *Phonograph* reporter. We 've got a permit from ——" Here the operator lowered his voice so that Myles did not catch the name he mentioned. It was evidently satisfactory, for the man stepped aside, saying :

"Go on, then. If he says so it must be all right."

So on they went, speeding through the darkness and waking the sleepy echoes of the night until the ten miles had been left behind, and the light of Station No. 1 shone out clear and bright, only a hundred yards away.

Here another swinging red lantern warned them to stop. As they pulled up in front of the little station and sprang from their car breathless, and wringing wet with perspiration, they were surrounded by a curious crowd of railroad men who seemed to be making this their head-quarters. The operater answered all their questions satisfactorily, and, at the

mention of the magical name which Myles still failed to catch, they readily fell back, making way for the new-comers to enter the station. Here an operator of but limited experience was slowly sending and receiving short dispatches concerning the progress of the great strike. The change in the sound of the electric notes as the skilled operator who accompanied Myles sat down to the instrument was wonderful. The sluggish wire seemed to spring into wide-awake activity, and the sharp clicking of the key as the nimble fingers rattled off thirty-five words to the minute was like the continuous buzz of some great insect. At the end of an hour the column-long message had been sent and received without a break.

As the operator leaned back in his chair after this feat he remarked :

"That fellow at the other end is a lightning taker. I don't know him, and he must be a new hand ; but he 's a daisy, and I guess I 'll send him a 73 any how." *

"I wish you would also send this to the *Phonograph* for me," said Myles, handing the operator a slip of paper on which was written :

* 73—The telegrapher's greeting. Equivalent to "best regards."

"Am out of money. Please send fifty dollars. Will explain upon return. MYLES MANNING."

After this had been flashed over the wires the operator said :

"My dear fellow, why did n't you tell me you were broke ? I would gladly have loaned you whatever you needed for a day or two. I can now if you will take it."

"Oh, no, indeed, thank you !" answered Myles. "They will get money to me somehow, and I should n't be in a fix any way if it was n't for the stupidity of that hotel proprietor." Then he told the story of his recent mortification, with which the operator sympathized warmly. He again tried to persuade the young reporter to accept a loan, but Myles steadily refused, and finally the matter was dropped.

After finishing their business they spent some time at Station No. 1 listening to bits of news regarding the strike. Myles now learned for the first time how very general it was, and how it was paralyzing the business of the whole country. He was told that the militia of many States had been ordered out, and that even detachments of troops from the regular

army were hurrying to points where riots were expected. The men gathered about the station spoke very bitterly of this sending of soldiers to aid in "cheating them of their rights," as they expressed it, and declared that they would make things lively for any troops that came in their way.

While they were thus talking word was received over the wire that the 50th New York Regiment was ordered to Mountain Junction and would start the next morning.

This dispatch was greeted with an angry yell by those who crowded up to the operator's window to hear it read, and Myles heard more than one muttered declaration that the 50th would have a sweet time getting there, and a red-hot time when they arrived. He wanted very much to send a few hundred words more to the *Phonograph* describing the scenes about the station and the strikers' reception of the news regarding the 50th, but he was sternly forbidden to do so.

"No, not Jake Allen himself should n't send another word to any paper, now that they are going to put the soldiers on to us," shouted one man.

"What has Allen got to do with it, that they

mention his name in that way?" asked Myles of his friend.

"Why," answered the operator, "did n't you know that he was the grand mogul and recognized leader of all the strikers in these parts?"

"No, I had no idea of such a thing."

"Well, he is; and if it had n't been for him we would n't have got here to-night. He seems to know all about you, and he gave us permission to come out. It was only by using his name that we got through."

At length Myles and the operator boarded their car to go back to town, to which they promised, in return for the favors shown them, to carry the news of the expected coming of the New York regiment. The return journey was a hard one. Both of them were sleepy and tired out. They were no longer borne up by the excitement that attended their outward trip, and their hands were blistered by the crank-handles. The car grew heavier and heavier as they forced it slowly up the long grades, while the miles seemed to stretch to infinity.

When they were half-way back they would have stopped for a while and taken an hour or two of

sleep where they were, but, all at once, they caught sight of a dull glow overhanging the distant town that they knew must be caused by some great fire. They also thought they heard shots every now and then. Their anxiety to find out what was going on lent them new strength, and again their car hummed merrily over the rails.

As they approached the town they met several small parties of men, who shouted to them to stop, and once a pistol-bullet whizzed by unpleasantly close to them, but they dashed forward without paying any attention to these orders.

At last they rolled into the railroad yard and stepped wearily from their car, only to be arrested by two soldiers, who said they must appear before Lieutenant Easter and give an account of themselves.

CHAPTER XII.

MYLES FALLS INTO A TRAP.

THE straightforward account that Myles and his companion were able to give of themselves and their movements quickly convinced the dapper little lieutenant that they were all right, but he warned them never to do so again. He had to say this, or something like it, in order to impress them with the importance of his position. This was the first time he had ever worn the wonderfully gorgeous uniform of his battalion in actual service; he might never again have a chance to exhibit it as a real commander of real soldiers on real duty, and he believed in making the most of opportunities as they were presented.

At the conclusion of this farce the suspected individuals were set at liberty and allowed to communicate the unwelcome intelligence that one of the crack New York City regiments was on its way to

Mountain Junction. It was unwelcome news to the lieutenant, because he knew that he would thus be speedily relieved of his command by some superior officer, and that his brief day of glory would be over.

"It is perfectly absurd to send more troops to this place," he sputtered, "especially a lot of city boys. What good can they do, I should like to know? Why, a single night's work such as we have just had would break them all up, while I, for instance, am fresh as a daisy and good for another just like it. I tell you, gentlemen, you want men of experience in affairs of this kind, not a lot of toy soldiers like those New York chaps. We don't need any help here, even if they were the fellows to help us. I and my command are perfectly well able to attend to all the strikers in this part of the country. Why, we have cleared the town of them already, arrested their ringleader, and to-morrow, or rather to-day, I propose to run a train over the Western Division, and see that it goes through, too! Of course you will make no mention of this," he added, with a laughable expression of anxiety; "for we do not wish our plans to be known generally."

"Of course not," answered Myles. "We understand that you do not wish to have your proposed ride on the cars interrupted by any meddlesome strikers. But whom did you say you arrested? I should like to have his name for publication."

Now this word "publication" meant a great deal to Lieutenant Easter. To get his name into the New York papers as one of the heroes of this great strike would be the crowning glory of his military career. Of course this reporter could not describe the arrest of one of the ringleaders of the strike and its attendant circumstances without mentioning the important part borne in the affair by himself, the commanding officer. So, without noticing Myles' remark about the proposed opening of the Western Division, he proceeded to give him a full account from his own point of view of what had taken place during the few hours just past.

According to this account, about one o'clock that night Mr. Watkins, filled with the responsibility of his position as acting division superintendent, had been making a round of the railroad buildings to see that every thing was all right. Near one of the car-shops he noticed a man evidently trying to con-

ceal himself in its shadow. Mr. Watkins challenged him, asked him what he was doing there, and ordered him off the premises. The man, answering in the well-known voice of Jacob Allen, a recognized leader of the strike, said he was only going, by the shortest way, to his home, and that he did not propose to go back and take a roundabout route to please Mr. Watkins or anybody else. Thereupon Mr. Watkins, very properly, called one of the military guards of the building and ordered him to arrest Allen.

The guard attempted to obey this order, but the striker, exhibiting a desperate ferocity, snatched his gun from him, and, pointing it at them, ordered both Mr. Watkins and the guard to leave or he would shoot. He even went so far as to cock the gun, and of course they were obliged to do as he told them.

Mr. Watkins immediately reported this outrage to him (Lieutenant Easter), and, taking a squad of a dozen of his best men, he went to Allen's house, and arrested him just as he was getting into bed. While they were doing this a fire broke out in the very car-shop near which he had been discovered,

and there was not the slightest doubt but that this Jacob Allen had set it. At any rate he would be tried for it, in connection with his other offences against the law, and he now occupied a cell in the town jail, where he was chained and handcuffed beyond a possibility of escape. In the meantime all the other strikers had taken to the woods, and he (Lieutenant Easter) could congratulate the town on being well rid of them.

Thanking the lieutenant for the information he had given them, Myles and the telegraph operator took their departure, the former to seek his bed in the hotel and get a few hours sleep, the latter to hunt up some particular friends for whom he had important news.

When Ben Watkins returned to his room, after his wicked attempt to burn the railroad building and his struggle with Myles, he was filled with such a fury of rage, shame, and hatred that his sole thought was of revenge.

For some time he paced restlessly up and down the room, trying to conceive some plan for the young reporter's utter humiliation and overthrow. He felt almost sure that in consequence of the telegram he

had sent to the *Phonograph* the night before, Myles would be dismissed from the paper; but that was not enough. Could he not inflict some more serious injury upon the fellow who had just told him that he, Ben Watkins, was whipped and in his power?

"Whipped, am I!" cried Ben, bitterly, "I 'll show him yet who is whipped. I may be in his power or he may be in mine; but that question is not settled yet, as he will find out before long."

Then the old evil smile crept over his face. A new idea entered his mind, and he paused in his hurried walk to consider it.

"Yes," he exclaimed, half aloud. "I believe it will work; and if it does it will land him in State prison, certain as fate! All I have to do is to make no mistake in my part of the programme and it will work itself out without any further effort. Why, the fool has actually gone and stuck his own head right into the trap. Things could n't suit me better if I had planned them beforehand."

Then Ben saw that his door was locked, plugged the key-hole, pinned the curtains to the window-frame so that it was certain no one could peep in, and, producing the express package that he had

taken from the safe, sat down to examine it. One thousand dollars in fifty-dollar bills! A careful count assured him that the sum was correct. Then he began to examine the bills separately and with the utmost care, studying their every detail on both sides. He even used a magnifying-glass to aid in his search.

At last his efforts seemed to be rewarded, and he laid one of the bills aside, though he did not cease his labor until every note in the package had been thoroughly examined. Leaving the bill thus selected, together with the express envelope in which they came, lying on the table, he thrust the rest into the pocket from which he had taken them and buttoned his coat tightly. Next he wrote a letter. It was short, but it evidently needed to be written and worded with great care, for several sheets of note-paper were torn into minute fragments before one was prepared to his satisfaction. Folding the selected bill inside of this letter, he placed them in an envelope which he sealed, directed, and stamped. This he also placed in his pocket.

Now, turning out his light and taking the empty express envelope, he softly unlocked and opened the

door of his room, took out the key, and for a minute peered cautiously up and down the dimly lighted hall, listening intently at the same time. Then he removed his shoes and walked rapidly, but with noiseless tread, to the door of the room occupied by Myles Manning. It was locked, of course, but, as is often the case in small hotels, the key of one room would unlock the door of every other, and Ben's key unlocked this door as readily as his own.

Although certain that the room was empty, for he knew Myles to be out of town, Ben exercised the utmost caution as he entered it and softly closed the door behind him. He did not remain there more than a minute, but when he came out he trembled so violently that it was difficult for him to insert the key into the lock. When he had accomplished this he sped back to his own room, possessed of the miserable fear that always follows a guilty conscience. Ben was bad, and had been for years; but he was now practising a new style of wickedness, and the terror that it inspired was unlike any he had ever before known.

Having transacted all these items of business to his satisfaction he resumed his shoes, put on his

hat, and, quietly leaving the hotel without being noticed, walked down town to the post-office, where he mailed his letter.

Then, for fear that he had been seen, and wishing to have a good excuse for being on the street at that hour of the night, he made the pretence of examining into the safety of the car-shops, that resulted in meeting with Jacob Allen, as Myles afterward learned from Lieutenant Easter.

The fire that followed so closely upon Allen's arrest was set to carry out a threat made by the strikers that they would destroy some piece of railroad property for every one of their number who should be thrown into prison.

When Myles Manning, completely worn out with the hard work and excitement of the night, threw himself, without undressing, upon his bed, he fully intended to be up again and ready to go out with the train that Lieutenant Easter proposed to put through that day. He had been told that it would start at ten o'clock, or possibly earlier than that hour. When, therefore, after what seemed to him but a few minutes of heavy, dreamless sleep, he awoke to find the sun shining brightly and already high in the sky, he

feared he had neglected another opportunity of obeying the orders under which he was working, and lost his chance of accompanying the first train sent out since the beginning of the great strike.

Instinctively feeling for his watch, that he might see what time it really was, he was for a moment puzzled to account for its disappearance. Then the memory of the use to which it had been put the previous evening came back to him, and again he flushed with hot indignation as he recalled the mortifying position in which he was placed.

"Oh, what a fool I was—what a fool I was!" he cried out in his distress. "To gamble away money that I needed so badly, and which, at the same time, was not my own. That I am in this fix is all my own fault, though, and I am well paid for my folly. It is a bitter experience that I shall remember so long as I live, and it has at least cured me of gambling; for never again will I risk one cent upon a game of chance. No, not one cent," he repeated earnestly, as if registering a vow.

He hated to go down stairs with the chance of meeting the proprietor of the hotel.

"Though why should I?" he thought. "He

holds security worth twenty times the amount of his wretched bill. Oh, for a few dollars with which to pay him and demand the return of my watch, with an apology for his suspicions! I almost wish I had accepted that operator's offer of a loan. He 's a good fellow, and I would n't so very much mind being under an obligation to him."

Thus thinking, the young reporter went down to the hotel office, where a glance at the clock showed him that it was already past ten. As he was hurrying out of the front door the clerk at the desk said:

"Here is a letter for you, Mr. Manning."

Stepping back and getting it Myles thrust it into his pocket, feeling that he had no time to read letters just then, and set out on a run for the railway station.

There, to his great relief, he found the train that he feared had gone without him. It stood on the main track, and consisted of two cars, but no locomotive. The men of Lieutenant Easter's command, who were to go with it as a guard, stood in small groups near it, and everybody was evidently waiting for something. Myles soon learned that the difficulty was with the locomotive. One had been

got ready for the trip, but, with the first revolution of its great wheels, their connecting rod had fallen to the ground, and a serious injury to the machinery resulted. A small steel pin was missing, and could not be found. Upon examination of the other engines in the round-house it was discovered that the same important little pin was missing from every one of them. Each engineer upon leaving had drawn this pin and taken it with him. Now, therefore, the train could not move until a new one of these pins could be made and fitted to its place. Under the circumstances this was a slow and difficult undertaking, and it would be at least an hour yet before a start could be made. This being the case Myles thought he might as well return to the hotel for the breakfast of which he stood so greatly in need.

Going to his room, to wash his face and hands before sitting down to table, he suddenly remembered his letter. It was post-marked Mountain Junction, and the post-mark bore the date of that very day.

"That is curious," thought Myles.

His surprise was greatly increased when, as he opened the letter, a fifty-dollar bill fell from it, and he turned eagerly to its contents :

My Dear Mr. Manning:

Having accidentally learned of your temporary embarrassment, and knowing your unwillingness to accept pecuniary assistance from strangers, I take this method of forcing a slight loan upon you. Do not hesitate to make use of the enclosed $50 for when you are again in funds I will call upon you for repayment. Say nothing of this little affair, but use the money as your own, and believe me to be

A Friend in Need.

"Well, if that telegraph fellow is n't a trump!" thought Myles, as he finished reading this friendly note. "He has sent me the exact sum that I asked the office for in that dispatch, and sent it in such a delicate, generous way that I don't see how I can very well refuse to take it. He is, indeed, 'a friend in need,' and one whom I won't forget in a hurry. Yes, I will use the money, now that it has actually come to me, for I shall certainly soon be able to pay it back."

With a lighter heart than he had known since arriving in this town of incident and adventure, and with the bill in his hand, Myles ran down stairs and called for the proprietor, to whom he said:

"I 'll thank you, sir, for my watch, together with a receipted bill for my board to date, and here is the money to pay it. If there was any other hotel

in town I would not spend another minute in yours, you may depend upon it. Now make the change quickly, if you please, for I am in a hurry."

The landlord did not deign to reply to this little speech; but, taking the proffered bill and satisfying himself that it was genuine, he handed out the change, the watch, and a receipt without a word.

Myles ate his breakfast, or, rather, his lunch, for it was now nearly noon, with a hearty appetite, and then started off briskly and happily toward the railway station, prepared to encounter any adventure that the day might bring forth.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STRIKERS CAPTURE A TRAIN.

AT the railway station Myles found the train nearly ready to start and its military passengers on board. A foreman of the locomotive works was to act as engineer, and Ben Watkins was to be fireman. Lieutenant Easter found a seat in the locomotive cab, where Myles would have liked to join him but for the presence of Ben, with whom he wished to hold no communication. The two cars of the train were well filled, for the town was so quiet and so absolutely deserted by the strikers that the lieutenant did not think it necessary to leave more than half a dozen of his men in charge of a corporal to guard the jail and the railroad buildings. So he took nearly the whole of his command with him, and an interesting lot they were to Myles, who now, for the first time, saw them all together.

Most of them were green, awkward-appearing

young men, who had joined the company solely that they might wear its uniform. As has been said, this uniform was a remarkably gorgeous one, and it represented the taste of its wearers; for they had voted to adopt it at one of the very first meetings of their organization. It was of scarlet, black, and gold, and above the stiff beaver caps nodded scarlet and black plumes of cocks' feathers. These were the particular joy and pride of Lieutenant Easter's men, and were regarded by them as the most truly military and warlike portion of their equipment. If these fiercely nodding plumes did not inspire terror in the hearts of the strikers, what would?

The whole business of the strike was looked upon as a picnic by these gorgeous militiamen. They had no idea that it might mean fight. Oh, no, that was too absurd. No body of strikers with a grain of sense among them would be so foolhardy as to await their coming. Their mere appearance on the scene would be the signal for flight. Did they not have law and muskets on their side?

Thus they talked and boasted as the train rolled slowly out of town without meeting the slightest form of opposition. Nobody in the car in which

Myles had found a seat spoke to him or paid the least attention to him, except to wonder who he was and what right he had there. He might be a striker, for all they knew. At any rate he did not wear a uniform, was evidently only an ordinary, every-day civilian, and was consequently unworthy of their notice.

Every thing went on smoothly and comfortably for an hour or so. The track was in perfect order, no strikers were to be seen, and the citizen soldiery were boisterously happy. As many of their muskets as could be were crowded into and snugly stowed in the package-racks above their heads, while the rest were shoved under the seats so as to be well out of the way. Their owners loosened their belts for greater comfort, played cards, smoked, ate, drank, and were merry. This state of affairs continued until they had gone about twelve miles. Then the train began to climb a long grade. Its speed was of course slackened by this, but not enough to attract the notice of the card-players.

All at once the great driving-wheels of the locomotive began to spin furiously, but without taking any hold of the rails. The engineer knew in a

moment what the trouble was—the track had been soaped!—and shut off steam. The train slid a few rods farther, and then stopped. As it did so a wild yell was heard in the bushes that at this point grew thickly close to the track. Then a crowd of men leaped from them and charged upon the motionless train. Half a dozen of them sprang to the locomotive, taking complete possession of it, and dragging its three occupants to the ground before they had time to offer the least resistance.

In less than a minute after it stopped the train was in undisputed possession of the strikers, and its passengers were their prisoners.

Myles was greatly startled and not a little alarmed by these summary proceedings. He sprang to his feet with the rest when the train stopped, and had nearly reached the rear door of the car when the strikers rushed in and commanded everybody to sit down. He obeyed the order at once, slipping into a little corner seat behind the open door. Here, as he was not in uniform, he escaped attention for a few minutes. Then a burly fellow, who seemed a sort of leader among the strikers, pulled back the door so as to reveal him fully, and asked gruffly:

"Who are you, and what are you doing here? What 's your position on the road?"

"I have n't any," answered Myles, who did not know whether to say he was a reporter or not.

"Well, who are you, then? Come, spit it out quick! We have n't any time for fooling."

"I am a friend of Jacob Allen's," replied Myles, with a happy thought.

"Oh, you are, are you? Well, how do I know that? It 's easy enough to say you are a friend of Jake Allen's, but how can you prove it?"

"By this," said Myles, producing a folded bit of note-paper that Allen had given him the night before. The man read aloud:

> The bearer, Mr. Manning, is my friend; and I wish all my friends to treat him as a friend of—Jacob Allen.

"That 's all right," said the man, returning the note to Myles, "though some of those that Jake Allen thought were his friends have gone back on him lately. Still, I guess we 'll have to pass you this time. I must say, though, that for a friend of Allen's you are in mighty poor company just now." Then he walked away, and Myles left the car to see what was going on outside.

Now it happened that a soldier occupying the next seat in front of the reporter overheard the reading of this note, and was struck by its curious wording. He afterward told Lieutenant Easter of it, and the Lieutenant told Ben Watkins, adding his own suspicions that this friend of Jacob Allen must be the very one who had conveyed to the strikers the news of this attempt to run a train through. "Otherwise," he said, "they could not possibly have known of it in time to plan the stopping and capture of the train as they did."

In thus laying suspicion upon Myles the Lieutenant entirely forgot that the reporter had a companion, the telegraph operator, the night before, when he himself gave away this information.

After leaving the car Myles was witness of some very funny scenes. First the strikers inside the cars secured all the guns they could find and passed them to their comrades outside. Then, two at a time, so guarded that there was no chance of escape, and solemnly assured that they were about to be hanged, the disgusted soldiers were made to leave the cars. As they appeared on the platforms in all the splendor of their gorgeous uniforms they were

greeted with howls of derision. The nodding cocks' plumes received their full share of attention, and at the cry of "Scalp 'em! scalp 'em! give us their scalps!" the gaudy feathers were shorn from the beaver caps or plucked out by the roots and distributed to all who wanted them. Then the prisoners were marched back into the bushes, struggling, protesting, pleading, making all sorts of promises, or, in some cases, laughing, and treating it all as a joke. As each couple reached a point beyond sight of their companions, to whom their fate was thus a mystery, they were stripped of their cherished uniforms with the exception of their shorn beavers, and made to put on pairs of greasy or coal-blackened overalls in place of them. Then the dejected-looking couple was allowed to step to one side and witness the similar treatment of the next two who were brought out.

Myles, who had no occasion to feel particularly sorry for the humiliation of these boastful soldiers, could not help joining in the merriment caused by their comical appearance. Even pompous little Lieutenant Easter had been deprived of his sword and shorn of his plumes, though he was permitted

THE STRIKERS REORGANIZING THE MILITIA. (*Page* 192.)

to retain his uniform. Beside him stood Ben Watkins, scowling savagely, and muttering threats that he dared not utter aloud.

A little later Myles overheard a conversation between two of the strikers, from which he learned that all the men captured with the train were to be put on board again and taken to within a short distance of the town to which they belonged, some thirty miles westward.

Now this would not suit him at all. His orders were to remain at Mountain Junction until recalled, and he proposed to obey them just as long as possible. So, fearing that Jacob Allen's note might not again avail him, and, watching for a chance when the attention of the strikers was fully occupied with the mock review of Lieutenant Easter's company, he quietly slipped back among the bushes, and in another moment was lost to sight.

From a well concealed hiding-place he saw all the captured men, including Ben Watkins, for whom the strikers had no love, put on board the cars strongly guarded. The track was then well sanded to overcome the effect of the soap, and finally he saw the train move slowly away and disappear over the crest

of the long up grade. Still he kept his hiding-place, until the crowd of strikers who remained had gathered up and shouldered the captured muskets, stuck the scarlet and black cocks' plumes in their hat-bands, and also departed. As they marched on the railroad toward Mountain Junction, in the very direction he wished to go, he waited until they were out of sight and hearing. After these prolonged waitings it wanted less than an hour of sunset when he returned to regain the track. Then, assuring himself that no human being was in sight in either direction, he set out bravely and at a rapid pace to walk back over the twelve miles to the town in which he had been ordered to stay.

Walking on a railroad track is by no means easy work, and before he had accomplished more than half the distance to the town the young reporter wished that a train, or, at least, a hand-car, would come along and give him a lift. The sun had set, it was rapidly growing dark, and Myles was as rapidly growing very hungry. His way lay through a particularly rough and lonesome stretch of country. It was mountainous and heavily wooded. He had not seen a house, unless one or two distant huts of char-

coal-burners could be called such, since he started. Now the solitude and the silence, only broken by the melancholy cries of a whippoorwill or the weird hootings of an occasional owl, became drearily oppressive, and Myles longed for human companionship. If only he had his jolly comrade of the night before, the telegraph operator. But he had not, and he tried to cheer his lonely way by whistling as he trudged wearily along. He kept a sharp look-out for lights on either side of the way, determined to go to the first one he saw in the hope of finding food. He also decided that if he found any sort of shelter for the night he would remain there until morning, for the thought of crossing, in the dark, the several trestle-bridges over mountain torrents that lay between him and the town was by no means pleasant.

At last he saw a faint gleam, apparently that of a candle, at some little distance on his left. Whether it was far away or near at hand Myles could not tell. It at least betokened the presence of human beings, and he determined to try and reach it. He did not find any road or path leading to it, but worked his way slowly, with many a stumble amid rocks, trees, stumps, and bushes, toward the light. He often lost

sight of it, but always found it again, until, all of a sudden, he was close upon it.

It came from a cabin, apparently that of a charcoal-burner, only somewhat larger than most of those he had seen. In order to announce his presence he gave a shout, which was answered by the savage barking of a dog that came bounding toward him. As Myles felt for a stick or a rock with which to defend himself, the door of the cabin was opened and a harsh voice shouted:

"Tige! you Tige! Be quiet, sir. Who 's there?"

"I am," answered Myles.

"Well, who 's I?"

"A stranger in search of something to eat and a place to sleep in."

"Step up here and let 's take a look at you. Tige, be quiet!"

The dog obeyed his master so far as keeping quiet was concerned, but he followed the new-comer and sniffed at his heels in a manner both suggestive and extremely unpleasant.

The figure that confronted Myles in the door-way was that of a tall, broad-shouldered, rough-looking man, clad in a flannel shirt and a pair of coarse trousers tucked into cowhide boots.

"Well, you be a stranger, sure enough," said he, holding a candle so that its light shone in the other's face; "leastways I never see you in these parts before. An' you 've struck a mighty poor place. This ain't no hotel, and I reckon you 'd better travel a bit further on."

"Where to?" asked Myles.

"To the Junction, I expect. There ain't no place short of that, as I know of, where you could be took in."

"But that is a long way off," objected Myles, "and I don't believe I could cross the bridges in the dark."

"No more do I believe you could," replied the man.

"Besides, I am willing to pay, and pay well, for whatever food and shelter you will give me," added Myles.

"Will you pay a dollar?"

"With pleasure."

"In advance?"

"Yes, if you insist upon it."

"Let 's see your money, stranger, and I 'll see what I can do."

Now Myles had no money with him except the change from the fifty dollars that he had tucked

into the envelope in which the bill had come to him that morning. So he was obliged to produce this in order to get out the required dollar.

Upon receiving his pay in advance and discovering his would-be guest to be a person of means the man's manner softened. Saying, "Step in, stranger, and I 'll see what I can do for you," he led the way into the cabin. Myles followed him, glad to accept even so poor a shelter, and little dreaming that before morning he would be ten times more anxious to escape from it than he was now to be admitted.

CHAPTER XIV.

A RACE AGAINST TIME.

SEVERAL events combined to make Myles regret seeking shelter in that cabin instead of pushing on with ever so slight a chance of reaching the town in safety, or camping out under some tree and bearing the night's cold and hunger as best he might. To begin with, he lost his money in this cabin, or at least he thought he lost it there, when, late the next day, he made the discovery that it was gone. In regard to it he was only certain of two things. One was that he had it safe enough when he reached the cabin, and the other was that he did not gamble it away. Whether he was robbed as he slept, or whether, after replacing it in the envelope, it slipped to the ground instead of into his pocket, as he meant it should, he could not tell. It did not seem possible that either of these things had happened. If he was robbed why was not his watch

taken also? And he did not believe he could have been so careless as to let the package slip to the ground without noticing it. At any rate the money disappeared, and with it went the kindly worded note signed "A Friend in Need."

The interior of the cabin presented a much more cheerful and comfortable appearance than was promised by the outside. It contained two rooms, in the larger of which a fire was glowing on an ample hearth. The man appeared to be the sole occupant of the place, and, bidding Myles sit down and wait a while, he proceeded to prepare supper for the hungry reporter.

He was evidently not an inquisitive man; for, as he busied himself over the fire, he asked no questions. Neither did he volunteer any information, except that it was a dark night and middling cool for the season. Myles tried to enter into conversation with him, but the man was so evidently disinclined to talk that he soon gave up the attempt and watched him in silence.

In about half an hour a much better supper than he had dared expect was ready for him. It consisted of fried ham and eggs, a cup of hot tea, plenty of

bread and butter, and a dish of preserved peaches. To Myles it seemed about the best meal he had ever eaten, and he did full justice to it, while the man sat silently gazing into the fire and smoking a short black pipe.

When the reporter had satisfied his appetite he felt more sociable and inclined for a chat than ever; but, though he exerted himself to the utmost to be entertaining, he only succeeded in getting from the man an occasional yes and no or a grunt that might have meant either. Finally, in despair, he said he guessed he was ready to go to bed. The man rose, knocked the ashes from his pipe, lighted a candle, and led the way to the other room. There he pointed to the single bed that it contained and told his guest that he might "lay down" on it if he liked. Then, without another word, he set the candle down and went out, closing the door behind him.

Thus left to his own devices, Myles examined his surroundings curiously. The room was a small one, having two windows, but no door except the one by which he had entered. It contained a cot-bed, a couple of chairs, and a rickety bureau. From nails driven into the rough board wall hung a few articles

of men's clothing. The young reporter's curiosity was quickly satisfied, and, opening one of the windows wide, for he believed in plenty of fresh air, he blew out the light, pulled off his shoes, and lay down on the outside of the bed.

For some time he listened to the movements of the man in the adjoining room, from which his was only separated by a thin board partition, and to Tige's uneasy prowlings and occasional growls outside. Then he fell asleep.

Some hours later he was wakened by the dog's furious barking and the harsh voice of his master bidding him be quiet. Then he heard other voices, and presently two men entered the outer room. The owner of the cabin evidently met them outside and warned them of his presence; for, as they came in, Myles heard one of them ask in a low tone:

"Who is he, any way?"

"Blest if I know," was the host's reply. "He 's a stranger to these parts, and I reckon he 's harmless. He did n't ask no leading questions, and if he knows any thing it is n't on account of my telling."

"It certainly is not," thought Myles.

"Is he asleep, do you think?" was the next question.

"I don't know, but I 'll make an errand into his room and find out."

Myles instantly closed his eyes and began to breathe heavily. The next moment his door was softly opened and his host, with a candle in his hand, tiptoed across the floor and took down a coat that hung on the opposite wall. Then he went out.

"Yes, he 's asleep fast enough," Myles heard him say.

"Let 's take a look at him," said one of the men.

Again Myles was obliged to feign sleep while his face was closely examined by the new-comers. It was a trying moment, but he succeeded in acting his part so well as to convince them that he was really asleep.

He was greatly relieved when they left the room, and still more so when he heard one of them say:

"No, he don't belong to these parts; but, whoever he is, he sleeps like a log. You must have given him a dose of your sleeping-drops, Bill."

"Not much I did n't," answered Bill, in whose voice Myles recognized that of his host. "He did n't ask for it, and you can bet I was n't fool enough to offer it."

"Well, whether you did or not, you want to offer

it to us, and about two gallons of it too. The boys have got a big job on hand, and will need bracing up before they 've done with it."

"What is it?" asked Bill.

"Sh! Not so loud," answered one of the men.

Then a long conversation followed, but at first it was carried on in such low tones that Myles only caught a word of it now and then. A clinking of glasses explained why it gradually grew louder, until at last every word came plainly to the ears of the young reporter. The first thing that he heard distinctly was:

"Jake Allen was too tender-hearted about it. He sent 'em word that the track was in a dangerous condition, and if they came ahead it would be at their own peril. I 'd a let 'em come without a word, and find out for themselves."

"But I thought Jake Allen was locked up," said Bill.

"So he was, but he is n't now. When that fool of a lieutenant carried off all his men, or the best part of 'em, what was to hinder the boys from slipping into town and letting Jake out? Just nothing at all, and that 's what they did. No, there was n't

any fuss. It was all done quiet enough, and now that Jake is out they won't get him in again in a hurry, you can bet on that. We 're just laying for them city roosters, though, and it will serve 'em right if the whole regiment gets pitched into the creek. What business have they, anyhow, coming out here to interfere with us and our rights?"

"Then they are really coming, are they?" asked Bill.

"Coming! Of course they are, a whole train-load of 'em. They got as far as Martin's yesterday, and, if they make an early start and get along as fast as they have been doing, they 'll be where we want 'em soon sun 's up."

"Where 's that?"

"Just this side of Station One. Somewhere on the Horseshoe."

"Are you going to fight 'em there?"

"Fight? Not much! The boys won't be there at all; but they are fixing up a little trap to leave behind 'em that 'll do the business. The boys will be far enough away long before that, though. There is n't anybody going to be caught in this racket."

From all this Myles concluded that the 50th

Regiment from New York City, of whose intended coming he had already heard, was really on its way to Mountain Junction. Some sort of a trap had been laid for them on the Horseshoe, a sharp curve on the edge of a deep stream that he remembered well. What if the train should be thrown from the track there! Why, the result would be simply horrible. They had been warned of danger, too, and yet would insist upon pushing ahead. Of course they would do that, though; and Myles thrilled with an honest pride as he thought how the boys of a New York City regiment would laugh at the word "danger." "It would only make them come ahead all the quicker," thought he, "for when those fellows are 'under orders' obeying them is the first thing they think of, and the danger of doing so the very last. But it would be awful if any thing were to happen to that train. Could n't any thing be done to warn them? Could n't I do something even now? If I were only at Mountain Junction, where I ought to be, instead of 'way off here in the woods—on the wrong side of it too!"

All these thoughts flashed through the young reporter's mind in a minute, and they were followed by another.

"Was he not under orders as well as the boys of the 50th? Did not his duty order him to make an effort to warn them of their danger? Of course it did; and the orders of duty, when given as plainly as in this case, ought to be obeyed as promptly as those of a city editor. What a splendid thing it would be, too, if he only could get there in time! It was certainly worth trying for, and he would make the attempt."

Stepping softly from his bed he went to the window. What was to hinder him from leaving the cabin this way? One leg was already over the sill, and the other was about to follow, when a deep growl from just beneath the window caused him to hurriedly draw back. Tige was on guard.

Then Myles listened at the door. The men were still talking. Why not walk boldly out and announce his intended departure? No, that would never do. They might take it into their heads to stop him, and they were three to one.

The sound of moving chairs sent him flying back to the bed, where, to all appearances, he was instantly fast asleep.

"Well, Bill, it 's time for us to be off," said one of the men. "Trot out your stuff and let us make a start."

"There is n't another drop in the house," answered Bill, "and I reckon you 'll have to go up to the still with me and get it."

"All right; but you 'd better take a look at that young feller in the other room first."

Bill looked in, and a single glance satisfied him that his guest was as oblivious of his surroundings as before.

"It 's all right," he said. "He 's good to sleep till sun-up, and I 'll leave Tige to watch him. That dog won't let any one leave the house any more than he 'd let 'em get in when I ain't round. He 's a bully old bull-dog, Tige is, and no one don't want to trifle with his affections."

Then the three men, taking a lantern with them, left the cabin, and Myles listened until their voices died away in the distance. Tige had been ordered to stay behind, and he obeyed orders. Myles went to the open window, and the bull-dog growled at him. He went to the door, and found Tige already watching in front of it. Here was a pretty fix: caged by a dog, and so much depending upon his liberty! Myles had a great mind to rush out and fight the dog, but he did not at all fancy the under-

taking, nor was he at all certain how such a fight would result.

"If it were only a man," he thought, "I 'd risk it quick enough."

All at once a bright thought flashed into his mind. Dogs were always hungry. Part of his supper had been cut from a large ham that hung by the fireplace. Striking a match, he easily found it. He took it to the back window. Tige was there. The next moment the ham had been flung in the direction of his growl, and he was worrying it.

Then, still in his stocking feet, with his shoes in his hand, the reporter stole softly to the front-door which he had left unlatched, and slipped out into the darkness. For five minutes he hardly dared breathe, as he cautiously felt his way among the rocks and stumps. At the end of that time he found a sort of road leading in the direction he wished to take. After overcoming many difficulties he reached the railroad. Two hours later he was once more at Mountain Junction, having safely passed three bridges by crawling on his hands and knees over the railway-ties.

It was now daylight, and another hour would see

the sun rise. What should he do next? To whom should he turn for help? As Myles asked himself these questions he was challenged by the guard at the railway station. The reporter asked that the corporal might be summoned, as he had important information for him.

The corporal was tired, sleepy, and cross. He had heard nothing from Lieutenant Easter, or those who had gone with him, and would not believe it when Myles told him they were all prisoners in the hands of the strikers. No, he could not, and he would not if he could, do any thing to help the 50th Regiment. He did not care whether they got there or not. Let them look out for themselves if they were so smart as they claimed to be. Yes, Myles might take the hand-car and go out to meet them if he wanted to, but he would be a fool for his pains, and would probably come to grief. The town was surrounded by strikers, who had sworn not to let any one out or in until their difficulty with the company was settled. They would stop the hand-car before it got a mile. Even if they did not, the railroad to the eastward was probably in such a condition that nothing on wheels could pass over it. Did he know

where the telegraph operator could be found? No, he had not seen the operator for twenty-four hours, and did not believe he was in town.

So, despairing of obtaining any assistance, the young reporter decided to start off alone, do his best, and get as far as he could. Fortune might favor him. At any rate, the object for which he was striving was worth a desperate effort.

The hand-car that he and the operator had used on their trip was where they left it, except that it had been lifted from the track and set to one side. The corporal and the man on guard, with much grumbling at the foolishness of Myles' undertaking, helped him place it on the rails. Then he started off alone.

The car moved slowly out of the railroad yard, but by the time it reached the town limits it was rattling along at such a speed as only the muscular young arms of the best man in a university crew could give it. It had gone fast on that other trip. Was it days or weeks before? Myles tried to remember, but could not. The recent rush of events had completely driven dates from his mind. At any rate, though the car seemed to go fast on that

occasion, it had only crept as compared with now. Its speed on that long stretch of down-grade was simply tremendous. It was also wildly exhilarating. But for the breathlessness of his exertions Myles would have shouted and yelled in his excitement.

"Faster, faster!" rang out the whirring wheels as they spun over the gleaming track, and "Faster, faster, faster!" echoed the rails of steel.

The eastern sky was aglow with rosy light. The sun had nearly climbed to the mountain tops. Still he might be in time. If only he could get on a little faster! If only his muscles were steel and his lungs filled with steam!

But what is that ahead? A dark space in the shining track. A rail gone. Myles sprang to the brake. Its iron shoe ground fire from the iron wheel. The headlong speed of the car was slackened, but not enough. It could not stop before the danger-point was reached. Then came a crash, and Myles was flung forward on the hard road-bed.

Bruised and sadly shaken, but with unbroken bones, he picked himself up and turned to look at the wreck. The car also seemed shaken, but, to his surprise, it was still whole and serviceable. There

THE CAR PLUNGED FORWARD, TURNED COMPLETELY OVER, AND CRUSHED POOR MYLES BENEATH IT. (*Page* 213.)

was yet hope if he only could get it over this place and again on the track. His excitement lent him strength, and by a mighty effort he accomplished that which, under ordinary circumstances, two men would have found difficult.

Once more the car was ready for its onward flight. As it started Myles heard shouts, and, looking back, saw men running and beckoning to him. At the same moment he heard the far-away whistle of a locomotive ahead of him. He bent to the crank, and in another minute his pursuers lost sight of the car and the one straining figure that it bore.

Now it approached the Horseshoe curve. Yes, Myles remembered the place perfectly. The track looked all right. The sun had risen and he could see the line plainly. Perhaps the place from which the rails were torn was the trap, and he had passed it. Perhaps he was on hand and with time to spare.

Suddenly the rails of the track seemed to give from under him. The car plunged forward, turned completely over, and crushed poor Myles beneath it in such a manner that he was powerless to move. As he lay there he heard, loud, clear, and close at hand, the shrill whistle and the roar of an approaching train.

CHAPTER XV.

THE 50TH REGIMENT, N. G. S. N. Y.

THE speed at which Myles was going when the accident happened was so great that both he and the hand-car were flung clear off the track. They landed in a pile of soft earth, but, as already related, Myles lay beneath the car with his arms so pinned down by it that he was perfectly helpless and unable to move. As he lay there half-stunned, and panting for breath after his recent exertions, the roar of the approaching train grew louder and louder, until it seemed close upon him. He could hear the labored puffing of the locomotive as it toiled up the long grade. Now it came so distinctly that he knew the head of the train had rounded the sharp curve and was in sight of the place where he lay.

Oh for one moment of liberty in which to spring up and warn them of the danger so close at hand! Where were their eyes? Could they not see the

wreck of his car and be warned by it? Was he too late after all? Would the train keep on until it, too, struck the treacherous rails that, with every spike drawn, had spread beneath him?

In this agony of helpless apprehension the seconds seemed minutes and the minutes hours. Suddenly came the short, imperative blast of the whistle that said as plainly as words, "Danger ahead! Down brakes!" It was instantly followed by the grinding sound of the powerful air-brakes, and in another moment the train had stopped not fifty feet from where Myles lay.

He was in time. His "fool-hardiness," as the corporal at Mountain Junction had termed it, had prevailed, and the long train, with its precious human freight, was safe. With a great sigh of relief the burden of anxiety that he had borne for hours passed from him. He became aware of a feeling of faintness, and wearily closed his eyes.

He did not lose consciousness, for he heard a voice exclaim:

"Hello! here 's a man under this car."

"Well, get him out," said another, with a sharp tone of authority. "He is probably one of the ras-

cally strikers who planned this mischief, and then got caught in his own trap. Carry him to the baggage-car and see that he does not get away. I will investigate his case directly. Now look lively here with those spikes and hammers."

Myles was lifted by half a dozen active young fellows clad in a close-fitting gray uniform and carried back to the train, where he was laid on the floor of the baggage-car, with his head on a roll of blankets. Even as they started with him he heard the ringing blows of the spike-hammers, and almost as soon as they laid him down the loosened rails were securely re-fastened and the train was ready to proceed.

Myles was surprised to find that he did not suffer any pain denoting broken bones. He wondered if he were able to sit up, and, by trying, found that he was. In short, with the exception of feeling stiff and sore and bruised, and lame in every joint, he was all right. He was only a little shaky, and he next proceeded to stand up to assure himself that he could do that also. Here the gray-jacketed soldier who guarded him concluded that his prisoner was getting altogether too active, and sternly ordered him to sit still and keep quiet.

Myles looked at him with indignant amazement. Was this the kind of treatment a fellow had to expect in return for risking his own life and limbs to save those of these chaps? He was about to express himself pretty forcibly on the subject, when the car door was opened and a soldierly-looking man, with an iron-gray mustache and wearing the eagles of a colonel on his shoulder-straps, entered. The guard presented arms and the colonel touched his cap in acknowledgment of the salute. Then stepping briskly up to Myles he said:

"Well, sir, who are you? and what is the meaning of all this? Do you know that you have committed a State-prison offense, and that hanging would be no more than you deserve?"

"What is my offense?" asked Myles, quietly, still sitting on the roll of blankets.

"Don't bandy words with me, sir; but answer my questions at once. Who are you?"

Myles gazed calmly into the colonel's face, but remained silent.

"Will you answer me, sir, or will you not?" cried the colonel, flushing angrily beneath the other's steady stare.

"Perhaps I will and perhaps I will not," replied

Myles, whose very calmness betrayed the tumult of his feelings. "It depends entirely upon what authority you can show for asking them, and the manner in which they are put. So long as you see fit to insult me I shall only answer you with silence."

The audacity of this speech fairly took away the colonel's breath, and he stared at Myles in speechless amazement. Before he could recover himself the car door again opened. The figure that entered this time was not clad in uniform, but the guard allowed it to pass without hesitation.

Turning, and recognizing the new-comer, the colonel exclaimed:

"Here is a case that will interest you, sir. It will make a capital paragraph for your paper. Of all the strikers, train-wreckers, and other rascally characters I ever met this one has the most monumental impudence and brazen assurance. Why, what do you think— "

But the colonel never finished his remark, for Myles, who had gained his feet, here interrupted him with:

"Hello, Billings, old man!"

"Am I a Dutchman or am I not!" cried Bil-

lings, for it was indeed he, as he sprang past the colonel and grasped his friend's hand. "The voice is that of Myles Manning, while the face and general get-up is that of a mud-lark. What are you doing here? and what is the meaning of this melancholy aspect?"

"That is what this military gentleman with the unfortunate manner has been trying to find out," replied Myles, with a grim smile.

"Military gentleman? Unfortunate manner?" repeated Billings, in a perplexed tone. "Perhaps there is some misunderstanding between you two. Colonel Pepper, allow me to present my friend, Mr. Manning, of the *Phonograph*. Colonel Pepper is in command of the 50th Regiment, N. G. S. N. Y. X. Z., etc., and, if I do say it to his face, as I should n't, is one of the best fellows to be found outside of a newspaper office."

"A friend of yours, did you say, Mr. Billings?" asked the colonel, doubtfully.

"Of course he is, and, what is more, a fellow-reporter. Why, he is out here doing the strike for the *Phono*."

"Well, Mr. Manning," said the colonel, heartily,

and extending his hand, "I sincerely beg your pardon for mistaking you for a striker—and a mischievous one at that—and treating you accordingly. But why in the name of common-sense did n't you disclose your identity at once?"

"Partly because you did n't give me a chance, sir, and partly because I felt hurt—"

"Felt hurt!" interrupted Billings, to whom the conversation seemed to be taking altogether too serious a tone. "Well, your feelings must correspond with your looks then. For a more torn, tattered, battered, mud-bespattered, blood-stained, and generally seedy-looking individual than you are at this moment I never saw."

"Then you consider me excusable for mistaking Mr. Manning for a striker?" asked the colonel, with a smile.

"Excusable, colonel? Certainly I do! You would be excusable for mistaking him for any thing, from a relation to a politician," answered Billings, laughing. "But, look here, Manning, you have n't told us a word yet of how you happened to be a total wreck out here in the woods. I heard something about a car off the track and a striker found under

it, but I was eating a sort of a make-believe ham-sandwich breakfast just then. We have stopped so often for wrecked cars and missing rails that I did n't consider it worth while to let up on the Sam Handwich just to look after it. Thus I only just this moment found time to come and spy out the villain, and, behold, you are he."

"Your mention of missing rails," said Myles, "reminds me that two are gone from the track just about where we now are. I passed over the place not half an hour ago."

"Then excuse me for a moment," said the colonel, while I go and order a sharp look-out."

As he left the car the locomotive uttered its warning call for brakes. In another minute the train was at a stand-still, and several men were stripping off their clothing preparatory to diving in the stream alongside the track to search for the missing rails.

"That 's the way it goes," sighed Billings, resignedly. "We 've done nothing but make tracks for the last two days. But come, old man, now 's the chance to spin your yarn; out with it. All communications with a stamp enclosed regarded as strictly confidential, you understand."

So Myles told his story in as few words as possible, beginning with the capture of Lieutenant Easter's command and ending with his own thrilling ride of that morning.

As he finished Billings sprang to his feet, and, seizing his friend's hand, shook it warmly, exclaiming with a seriousness unusual to him :

"My dear fellow, you are a perfect trump; a full-fledged hero—with wings and tail-feathers well developed! And to think that these duffers should have taken you for a striker after what you did for them. It 's no wonder you look tough after what you 've gone through; but it 's an honorable toughness, and every splotch of mud on your face is honorable mud. You just wait till I tell the boys of the 50th what a *Phonograph* reporter has done for them. If they don't give you three fizz-booms and a Bengal tiger, then I 'm a brass monkey, that 's all."

"Oh, no," protested Myles, "don't tell them. It is n't any thing to make a fuss about."

"Is n't it? Well, we 'll just give the boys a chance to express an opinion about that," laughed Billings, with a touch of his old drawling manner as he left the car.

Myles still remained in the baggage-car, and the guard posted there when he was first brought in, but not yet relieved, now stepped up to him and said in a manly fashion:

"I could not help overhearing what you were talking about just now, Mr. Manning, and, if you will let me, I shall be proud to shake hands with you. It is n't every day that I meet with the fellow who is willing to risk his own life for mine, and when I do I like to know him."

What Billings told of his exploits Myles never knew, but while he was shaking hands with his guard the car door flew open and the "boys" came rushing in. Privates and men with shoulder-straps, all were eager for a look at and a word with the *Phonograph* reporter who had rendered them so great a service that morning.

They crowded the car almost to suffocation, and still not a tenth part of those who wished to get in could do so. Everybody wanted to shake hands with him. Everybody wanted in some way to thank him. Among them were several old X—— College men, proud to claim him as a fellow. They had been proud of Myles Manning, captain of the 'Varsity

crew; now they were still prouder of Myles Manning, the *Phonograph* reporter.

Poor Myles was overwhelmed and bewildered. He knew not what to say nor how to act. His embarrassment was becoming painful, when way was made for the colonel. He said:

"Come, boys, this will do for the present. Clear out now and give the brave fellow room to breathe. The 50th shall have a chance to show him what they feel on this subject, I give you my word on it."

When the last one had gone the colonel turned to Myles, and said:

"Mr. Manning, it would be useless for me to attempt to thank you for your splendid action this morning, either on my own behalf or that of the regiment I have the honor to command. There are no words to express such a gratitude as we feel. What you did any soldier might be proud to have done, and its results will follow you through life. You have within an hour made a thousand life-long friends. Now, sir, if you will honor the 50th by becoming its guest we shall be proud to entertain you as such during our stay in this part of the country."

Myles had no idea of what he said in reply to these kind words; but it must have been the right thing, for the colonel thanked him and seemed much pleased.

Then the whistle announced their approach to Mountain Junction, and the colonel, exacting a promise from Myles that he would not leave the car until he came for him, bowed and hurried away.

The town that had been so silent and deserted when Myles left it a few hours before was now filled with people, and a great crowd of sullen-faced strikers, grimy miners, men, women, and children, were gathered about the railway-station to witness the arrival of the famous New York regiment. As the train rolled slowly up to the station it presented a fine sight, and one calculated to impress the boldest strikers as a picture of disciplined force that was not to be trifled with.

The locomotive seemed covered with erect, resolute-looking young fellows in gray. They stood thick on the running-boards. They crowded the cab, and each held his musket in a sturdy grasp, with its gleaming bayonet pointed at an angle downward. The enemy need be many and bold who would dare

charge that thick-set hedge of prickly steel. Each platform of every car in the long train was guarded in a similar manner. It was, as Billings, who had returned to the baggage-car, quaintly expressed it to Myles, "A sign that read, 'No boarders need apply.'"

Through the open windows the crowd could see that every seat was filled with men in gray, each grasping a ready musket. It was fearful to imagine what a withering, death-dealing sheet of flame and storm of bullets might in an instant leap from those open windows at a single word of command. The crowd instinctively recoiled from them, and a great silence fell upon it.

As the train stopped a squad of men sprang from each car and cleared spaces in which the companies might form. Then the gray columns poured forth quietly, steadily, and without a break until the ten companies were full and the regiment stood in line, rigid, motionless, and expectant.

When all was in readiness the colonel came to the door of the car, from a window of which Myles and Billings had watched the forming troops, and said:

"Now, Mr. Manning, will you let me introduce you to my boys?"

THE NEXT MOMENT HE FOUND HIMSELF STANDING ON THE PLATFORM BESIDE THE COLONEL. (*Page* 227.)

Myles hesitated. He had dared face death in the heat of that exciting race against time; but to face a thousand men was quite another thing.

It was Billings who urged him on by saying:

"Come, old man, don't keep the music waiting. They 've got to toot or burst."

The next moment he found himself standing on the platform beside the colonel, while on that of the adjoining car stood Billings, smiling affably, and evidently prepared to receive any honors that might be showered upon him.

"Men of the 50th," said the colonel, in a loud, clear voice, that was distinctly heard by every one of those before him, "I have the honor of presenting to you a New York reporter who has rendered to us this day the greatest service one human being may render unto his fellows. His name is—" the colonel paused, lifted his hand, and with a mighty roar, startling in its suddenness and volume, the thousand throats of the regiment took the words from his mouth and shouted as one man.

"M-y-l-e-s M-a-n-n-i-n-g. Fizz-fizz-fizz, boom-boom-boom, Ti-*gah!*"

As the great shout rolled away among the listen-

ing mountains a sharp word of command rang out, and was echoed from company to company along the whole line. The band struck up "For he 's a jolly good fellow," and, marching as proudly as though under the eyes of the President of the United States, the superb, glittering regiment passed in review before bruised, ragged, mud-stained Myles Manning. Each company as it passed him presented arms, and the gleaming sword of each officer was raised in salute. It was not until they had all gone by that poor Myles remembered that in his bewilderment he had not acknowledged a single salute.

Billings had, though; and for whatever his fellow-reporter left undone the little man's appreciative smiles and graceful hat-liftings amply atoned.

CHAPTER XVI.

RECALLED AND DISMISSED.

AFTER the unexpected honor shown him by the boys of the 50th, Myles, accompanied by Billings, went to the hotel, where they both enjoyed the luxury of a much-needed bath. When they were ready to dress, Billings, gazing ruefully at his soiled linen, called out to Myles:

"I say, old man, have n't you got a clean shirt to lend a fellow!"

"Why, yes," replied Myles, "of course I can lend you one, but—" here he held out the garment in question, and looked at it doubtfully—"don't you think it will be a little large for you?"

"Oh, that 's all right," answered Billings, cheerfully. "I always like my things loose and roomy."

He certainly had what he liked in this case; for, when arrayed in the shirt and one of Myles' standing collars, which was three sizes too large, there was

little to be seen of him below the eyes that twinkled merrily over the edge of the encircling linen. When, thus enveloped, he appeared on the street, he was everywhere greeted with roars of laughter. It came to be considered a fine joke among his tall friends of the 50th to catch hold of this collar, pull it up, and, gazing down into it as if in search of him, to call out:

"Hello, little one! Come up here a minute, I want to speak to you."

For answer Billings, making a telescope of his hands, and gazing vaguely upward, would shout back:

"No, I guess not, thank you. It looks pretty cold up there in the clouds."

Within an hour after the arrival of the New York troops, Mountain Junction underwent a marvellous change. Its streets were quiet and orderly, its saloons closed, and a cordon of slowly pacing, gray-uniformed sentinels completely encircled the great area containing the property of the railroad company. The regiment was quartered in one of the roomy car-shops, and during the four days that it remained there not a man below the grade of

captain was permitted to stroll beyond the sentry line except under orders. The telegraph wires were repaired, and Colonel Pepper announced publicly that on and after that date passenger-trains, strongly guarded, would be run regularly both east and west from that point. The strikers were not to be molested, or interfered with in any way, unless they undertook to obstruct travel or destroy property, but they would do either of these things at their peril. He also gave notice that a train would leave Mountain Junction for New York that afternoon.

In the meantime Myles had been so fully occupied with the stirring events of the day, that it was not until he and Billings were in the hotel together that he thought to ask the latter how long he intended remaining at Mountain Junction, and whether he brought any orders from the office for him.

"Why, yes," replied Billings, "that reminds me that I have a note for you from Mr. Haxall. My orders are to remain here as long as the regiment does, and to return with it. Here 's your note now."

Opening it Myles read:

"MR. MANNING :

"Upon receiving this note from Mr. Billings you will return to New York and report at this office immediately. Mr. Billings will furnish what money is needed to meet your current expenses. "Yours etc.,

"J. HAXALL, *City Editor*."

"That 's too bad," said Billings, as Myles read this short but very decided communication aloud. "I thought you and I were to work together here as we did at New London. Well, it can't mean anything, except that Joe has got some better job for you. It must be something important too. But of course you won't think of starting before to-morrow?"

"The note says 'immediately,'" replied Myles.

"Yes, I know; but even then it can't mean that a fellow who has been through what you have to-day, and is all knocked up, should set off on the road again without a chance to pull himself together. Why, you can get a doctor's certificate that you are not fit to travel, and won't be for several days."

"A doctor's certificate might satisfy Mr. Haxall, but it would not satisfy me," replied Myles, with a faint smile. "I know that I am perfectly well able to travel, and that the ride to New York won't hurt me any more than staying here.

Nothing that Billings could say had any effect upon this determination, and when, a few hours later, a train, guarded by a full company of the 50th, was made up for New York, Myles was among its passengers. A number of his new-found soldier friends crowded about him, full of regret at his departure, and urging him to remain with them at least for that night. To them Myles only answered that he was under orders as well as they, and must obey them.

The train was ready to start. The conductor was shouting "All aboard!" and Billings was bidding his friend good-bye, when Myles suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, Billings, I owe the telegraph operator here fifty dollars. He loaned it to me yesterday, and since then I have n't had a chance to see him. Will you find and thank him for me, and tell him I will write, and return the money as soon as I reach New York?"

"All right!" shouted Billings, as he stepped from the moving train. "That and all other commissions executed by yours truly, at moderate charge."

The captain commanding the escort that accompanied the train came and sat down beside the young reporter. He was a quiet but determined-

looking fellow, as sun-browned and broad-shouldered as Myles himself. His intelligent conversation served to banish the anxious thoughts that on account of his unexpected recall were beginning to oppress the latter. Myles could not help contrasting his manner with the boastful swagger of Lieutenant Easter and the neat gray uniform worn by his present companion with the gorgeous plumage of the other. He interested the captain, whose name was Ellis, by describing the capture of the train on which he had ridden the day before, and the comical plight to which its escort had been reduced. When he told Captain Ellis that the assistant division superintendent had also been made a prisoner and carried off by the strikers the other said:

"He must have escaped then, for I heard of him in his uncle's office just before we started. The colonel was talking to the superintendent, and, as I went in for final instructions, I heard the latter say that his assistant had only just returned from a trip over the western division and that——"

"The superintendent!" exclaimed Myles. "The division superintendent? Is he at Mountain Junction?"

"Yes, he came in on a special a few minutes

before we left and reported that no new damage had been done to the track."

This was startling information to Myles, for it recalled the fact, which he had utterly forgotten, that he still had the key of the safe.

Supposing the superintendent should even now be asking for it and Ben should be obliged to confess that it was not in his possession. What would be the result? Of what might not poor Ben be suspected? He had not dreamed of such a complication as this. Why had he been such a fool as to insist upon having that key anyhow? After all, it was none of his business to try to guard the company's property in that way. If they trusted Ben and he was unworthy, that was their own affair. Now what was to be done?

So occupied was Myles with this train of thought that his companion asked him a question unheeded; and, thinking it had not been heard above the noise of the cars, he repeated it.

"I beg your pardon," said Myles, starting from his reverie, "did you speak?"

"I only asked if you ever met the division superintendent?"

"No, I never did. But I have got the key to his

safe, and was wondering how I could return it most quickly."

"That is curious," said the captain. "Was it intrusted to your keeping for fear lest the strikers might get hold of it?"

"Yes—that is, not exactly. It was intrusted to my keeping, but not wholly on account of the strikers," replied Myles, with some confusion. "You see, I can't tell you how it came into my possession without breaking a promise, but if it is not returned at once I am afraid trouble will result."

"Does not the division superintendent know that you have it?" asked the captain, with an air of surprise.

"No; that 's just it; and I would n't have him know it if it could be helped."

The captain was more than ever puzzled by this, but was far too polite to give utterance to his thoughts.

"You might return it by express," he suggested.

"So I might," said Myles, brightening at the thought. "Yes, that 's what I 'll do. I 'll send it back by express from the first station."

With this he drew the troublesome key from his

pocket, where it had remained for two days unthought of, and the captain gazed at it curiously. They hunted up some brown wrapping-paper and did the key up in a package that was left with the express agent at the next station. It was directed to the Assistant Superintendent, Western Division, A. & B. R. R., and the charges on it were paid.

"There is no danger but that it will get there all right?" asked Myles, anxiously, of the agent.

"Oh, no," was the reply. "Thanks to these gentlemen," nodding to the gray-uniformed soldiers outside, "trains are running pretty regularly now. Our matter goes through all right, anyhow, whenever there is any thing to carry it, for the strikers have n't any fight with the express company. They only stop freight and passengers."

So having satisfied himself that he had done the best thing under the circumstances, Myles returned to the train and dismissed the matter from his mind.

Captain Ellis, with his command, left the train at the eastern end of the Central Division, where they were to remain until the following day, and then return to Mountain Junction. It was quite late at night when Myles bade these friends good-bye.

Soon afterward he arranged himself as comfortably as possible in the car seat and fell asleep. When he next awoke his train was nearing New York and a boy was calling the morning papers close beside him.

Myles bought a *Phonograph*, curious to read the news of the great strike; for, though he was so well acquainted with what had taken place at and near Mountain Junction, it was four days since he had seen a daily paper, and he knew nothing of occurrences in other parts of the country. What was the heading of the first column on the first page? Was he reading it rightly? He went over it again slowly. Yes, there was no mistake. The heading was as plain as type could make it, and it was: "The Great Railroad Strike. Arrival of the 50th Regiment, N. G. S. N. Y. at Mountain Junction. Thrilling Details of their Trip. Daring Deed of a *Phonograph* Reporter. A Terrible Disaster Averted by his Ready Wit and Prompt Action. The Regiment Appreciates his Service."

What could it all mean? Could these flattering words refer to him and what he had done? Yes, they could and did. As he read down the long

column he found his own name mentioned more than once. There was a full, though perhaps slightly exaggerated, account of his ride, the wreck of his hand-car, the stopping of the train in consequence just in time, and the subsequent scene at Mountain Junction.

How fine it all looked in print! How much more daring and splendid the whole affair seemed now than it had twenty-four hours before, when he, stunned and bruised, was being told that he deserved to be hanged!

"Good for you, Billings, old man! Wait till I get a chance to tell the public what a splendid fellow you are, and what fine fellows all we reporters are any way. Perhaps we won't be sneered at now so much as we have been."

Thus thinking, and filled with a very pardonable pride, Myles read and re-read the story. As the train rolled into the station and he stepped from it he wondered if people would stare at him and point him out to each other. He wished he could meet some acquaintance who would call him by name; for, of course, everybody had read the account of his doings and would recognize *the* Myles Manning

at once. How strange that people should be going about their every-day business as if it were the one thing in the world of importance, and great events, worthy of record in the newspapers, were not happening! How commonplace and trivial the things that interested them seemed to him now, in the light of what had so recently taken place!

His first plan was to go directly to the *Phonograph* office. No, it was too early. Nobody would be there yet. Then he thought he would go to his room, get a change of clothing, and make himself presentable. Would it not be more effective, though, to appear in the office still bearing signs of his late experience? Myles thought it would. He would first get breakfast at a restaurant and then decide what to do next.

By the way, supposing they should see the paper at home? Of course they would, or had by this time. He had subscribed for it and ordered it sent to them when he first became a reporter. What a state of mind they would be in! He ought to telegraph them at once. Acting upon this impulse he stopped at the first telegraph station and sent the following dispatch to his mother:

"Do not be anxious. Am safe. Will be out to-night.
"MYLES."

There, that would allay their anxiety, and it was neatly done in just ten words. He wrote "Will be out to-night" because it was Saturday, and he meant to spend the following day at home.

Now for breakfast. In the restaurant an intelligent-looking gentleman sat on the opposite side of his table. He had no morning paper, and Myles offered him the *Phonograph*, anxious to see what effect that first-column story would have upon him. The gentleman thanked him politely, took the paper, glanced carelessly through it, and returned it without comment.

"Exciting story of the strike, is n't?" ventured Myles.

"Did n't notice it," answered the other. "I 'm tired of all these strikes, and never waste time reading about them. Life 's too short."

Myles replied: "Yes, that is so." But he thought: "What a stupid fellow!"

After all he reached the *Phonograph* office before any of the other reporters. Mr. Haxall sat in the great room alone. He glanced up from his papers as Myles entered and said:

"Ah, Mr. Manning, that you? Step here a moment, please."

"Now for a real triumph," thought Myles. "He must say something in praise for what I have done."

"You have been absent from this office for five days at Mountain Junction, I believe," said Mr. Haxall.

"Yes, sir."

"And in that time we have received but one dispatch from you?"

"Well, sir, I can explain—" began Myles, eagerly.

"Perhaps this is a sufficient explanation," interrupted Mr. Haxall, handing him a telegram.

It was: "Your reporter at Mountain Junction too drunk to send any news to-night. Better replace him with a sober man." And the telegram was dated five days before.

Myles felt as though some one had struck him a blow full in the face.

"But, Mr. Haxall—" he began.

"This office can accept no excuse for such a neglect of duty as that, Mr. Manning," said the city editor. "I am very sorry, but I am obliged to ask you to please hand the key of your desk to Mr. Brown."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BEST SISTER IN THE WORLD.

MYLES stood for a moment motionless in front of Mr. Haxall's desk like one who is dazed. Gradually the full meaning of the words, "Hand the key of your desk to Mr. Brown," dawned upon him. He was dismissed from the paper; dismissed for drunkenness and neglect of duty while under orders. He, Myles Manning, the son of a gentleman, and who had always considered himself one, had been drunk, and, because of it, the position which he had been so proud of, so confident of retaining, was no longer his. It was terrible; but, alas! it was true.

Without a word he turned away and went to his own desk. His own desk? No; it was his no longer. Some other fellow, who could keep sober and perform his duty faithfully, would have it now. Mechanically he unlocked the drawer and began to

take from it the treasures that had accumulated there: a rough copy of the first thing he ever wrote for the paper, the unfinished manuscript of a special article that he had hoped would win him a name in journalism, a few precious home letters.

While he was thus engaged one of the office-boys laid some mail matter before him. He glanced it over. A loving letter from his mother, full of anxiety as to where he was and what he was doing. They had not heard from him in so long. Kate and his father sent dearest love. They were having a hard struggle with poverty; but they were so proud of him, he was doing so splendidly, that thinking and talking of him kept them cheerful.

Myles thrust this letter into his pocket with a groan. There was a long letter from Van Cleef, full of what he was doing, enlivened by gay bits of description of life at summer resorts. He would be back next week. A note from his old gentleman friend of the Oxygen, asking his dear proxy to dine at the club with him that evening. It was dated that very morning. Then a telegram. It was from Billings, and read:

"Operator says some mistake. Never loaned you any money. Tried to, but you refused. B. W. in town. Furious against you. Do not know what for. Shall I thrash him in your name? Answer.

"BILLINGS."

This message diverted Myles' gloomy thoughts for a moment. If the telegraph operator had not loaned him the money, who had? Here was a mystery. Well, whoever it was would claim his own fast enough. He would have to wait, though. As well try to extract blood from a stone as money from him now. He was not only penniless, but hopeless of ever earning another cent.

Now a couple of reporters came in. They had read the morning's papers and were full of enthusiasm over the brave deed of one of their number. Seeing Myles at his desk they rushed up to congratulate him. This was more than the poor fellow could bear, and, hastily gathering up his papers, he hurried from the office, laying his key on Mr. Brown's desk as he passed it.

The two reporters stared after him amazed and indignant.

"It is curious how stuck up some folks can get with a little notoriety," said one.

"Yes," replied the other, "too stuck up to accept congratulations from ordinary every-day chaps like us. Well, the next time he may congratulate himself, but you can safely depend upon it that I won't run the risk of another such snub from him."

As Myles went down stairs he thought he might as well collect his week's salary, and stepped into the cashier's office to do so. The usual little brown envelope was handed to him, and he put it into his pocket without stopping to open it there.

Arrived at his own room he locked the door and gave way to his grief, mortification, and anger. Nobody ever had such hard luck as he; nobody was ever so shamefully treated. Mr. Haxall was a monument of injustice and tyranny. How he hated him! How he hated everybody! Thus he raved to himself as he paced furiously up and down the narrow limits of his room.

Thus an hour was passed, and still the tumult raged. He was desperate. He knew not which way to turn, and could see no hope in any direction. Should he go home? Should he stay in the city and try for other work, or should he fly to some distant part of the country where he was unknown,

and begin all over again? Each of these plans was rejected as soon as thought of. He could not go home and change their hope and pride in him to shame and sorrow. No; he loved them too dearly for that. There was no use in trying for a position on any other city paper. The story of his disgrace would bar every office door. He could not go to a distant city and start anew because he had no money with which to travel. He had his week's pay, to be sure; but how far would such a pitiful sum take him? Hardly thinking of what he did he opened the little brown envelope. A slip of paper fluttered to the floor. It was the order on the cashier for the money he had drawn to pay his expenses on his recent trip. As he had rendered no account of these expenses, and as the sum thus drawn was far in excess of his week's salary, the cashier was obliged to charge the full amount to him and withhold the salary as partial payment.

This last blow was too much. Myles flung himself on his bed and buried his face in the pillows. How long he lay there, utterly forsaken, prostrated, and hopeless, he never knew; but he was finally aroused by a knock at his door.

He felt that he could not see anybody then, and did not answer it. He hoped whoever it was would believe him to be out and go away; but the knock was repeated.

"Who is it?" he called, in a gruff tone.

"It is I, Myles; your Sister Kate. Why don't you open the door?"

Kate in the city! Kate there at his door! He could n't see her. He could not let her see him in his present condition. No, he could not bear it. He was about to tell her so and beg her to go away. Then the thought that she might as well know the worst now as later caused him to change his mind. He unlocked the door, and Kate Manning, happy-looking, and flushed with exercise, entered.

"Oh, I 'm so glad," she began, and then, with a sudden change of tone and in a shocked voice, "Why, Myles Manning, what is the matter? I never saw any one look so dreadfully in all my life."

"Probably you never met anybody who had such cause for feeling dreadfully as I have," replied Myles, as he placed a chair for his sister and leaned gloomily against the mantel-shelf that nearly filled one side of the little room.

HE LEANED GLOOMILY AGAINST THE MANTEL SHELF THAT NEARLY FILLED ONE SIDE OF THE ROOM. (*Page* 248.)

"What do you mean, Myles? Sit down there on the bed and tell me all about it at once," commanded Kate, nervously pulling off her gloves as she spoke.

Then Myles sat down and told her the whole miserable story, beginning with the day he went to Mountain Junction and ending with the moment of his present disgrace and wretchedness.

"You poor, poor, dear boy!" exclaimed Kate, as he finished, and with her eyes full of sympathetic tears. "I never in my life heard of so much trouble coming to one person all at once. There is one splendid thing about it all, though."

"Is there?" asked Myles, doubtfully. "What is that?"

"Why, after such a terrible experience you never, never, so long as you live, will touch another drop of liquor; will you, dear?"

"I don't think I 'm likely to."

"But promise me you won't!"

"All right, Kate, I promise."

"There! Now I am really glad it has all happened. But how splendidly you saved that train! Why did n't you tell Mr. Haxall about it? If you had he could n't possibly have done more than to

reprimand you. He would never have dismissed you in the world."

"He knew all about it," replied Myles. "It 's all in the paper. Have n't you read the *Phonograph* this morning?"

"No, I have n't had a moment's time to look at the papers to-day. Do you mean that what you did is in the paper, with your name and all?"

For answer Myles handed her his copy of the *Phonograph*, and she read eagerly at the place he pointed out. Her cheeks flushed as she read, and when she finished she sprang up, and, throwing her arms about her brother's neck, exclaimed:

"It is simply wonderful, Myles! wonderful! And I should think you 'd be the proudest boy in New York City at this minute. Why, just because I am your sister I am the proudest girl in it."

"I suppose I was just a little proud before I went to the office this morning," said Myles, gently disengaging himself from his sister's embrace; "but I guess it was the sort of pride that goeth before a fall. At any rate, I got my fall, and a pretty serious one it was too."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Kate, "What 's one fall?

A man ought not to mind such a thing as that. Do as you did when you were a little boy, pick yourself up and run on again."

"That 's easy enough to say, but hard to do. To begin with, I am disgraced and penniless."

"Penniless!" echoed Kate, ignoring the other word. "Well, I can remedy that. It 's just what I came to tell you about. I went to the office first, and they said you had gone home. So I came up here. There, sir; now you are not penniless."

While she spoke she had been unlocking a ridiculous little bag that hung from her arm, and now, taking from it a roll of bills, she thrust them into her brother's hand.

"Why, Kate, what is this? Where did you get hold of so much money?" exclaimed Myles.

"Earned it, sir!"

"Earned it! You earned it?"

"Yes. I have been trying for it all summer long. I 've sent drawing after drawing to every illustrated paper and magazine in the country, and they have all been returned, until last week, when I had one accepted at W——'s."

"At W——'s!" interrupted Myles, to whom

such a piece of good fortune seemed almost incredible.

"Yes, sir, at W——'s. The very place of all others in which I most wished to succeed, and where I had the least hope of doing so. They sent a note saying that it was accepted, and I came in town this morning to get the money for it. Twenty-five dollars they gave me. What do you think of that? And it 's all yours, you dear old fellow you! every cent of it. Oh, I 'm so proud and glad that it came just at this time, when you needed it so much! And they praised the drawing and gave me an order for another. It is to illustrate a short story, and I 've got the manuscript here to take home and read and get an inspiration from. Oh, Myles, why can't you write stories and let me illustrate them? It would be the most splendid thing in the world.

"So it would, but there is one important drawback to such a scheme."

"What?"

"My inability to write stories. You have proved that you are able to do your part of such a work, and I have proved myself unable to do mine. From what has happened to-day it is evident that I am not

even fit for a reporter's position, and that is only the first stepping-stone in literary work."

"Myles Manning, you must n't talk so about yourself! You know you have done splendidly ever since you began on the *Phonograph*, and if that horrid Mr. Haxall was n't a perfect stupid, he 'd know that he had done a very foolish thing in letting you go. He will wish he had you back, and try to get you too, some day; see if he don't. Then what a triumph it will be to be able to say: 'No, I thank you, sir, I have found something better to do.'"

"It is impossible to fancy myself saying any such thing," answered Myles, with a smile—the first that his face had worn in hours. "But, Kate, it is you who have done splendidly, and it is I who ought to be proud of having such a sister. I am proud, too, just as proud as I can be, of you, but I can't take your money, dear."

"Oh, Myles, what shall I do with the hateful money if you don't take it? That is the one thing that makes money worth having—the power, I mean, that it gives us to help those we love. Don't take away this great pleasure from me. Don't, there 's a good boy."

So these generous young souls struggled with each other, the one to give, and the other against receiving the gift, until finally they reached a compromise. Myles agreed to take ten dollars from his sister as a loan, while she declared she should put the rest aside for his use, and should not touch it so long as there was the slightest chance of his needing it. Then they discussed plans for the future, and Kate said:

"Why not be your own city editor, Myles, and give yourself interesting assignments to work up? I 'm sure there are lots of things people want to know about, and if you would only write them up some of the papers would be certain to take your articles—and pay you well for them too.

"The trouble is there are so many fellows doing that very thing," answered Myles.

"Well, that is the trouble with every thing. There are quantities of people doing the same thing in every kind of business. If you can only do the same thing a little better than any one else though, or even as well as half of them, you are sure to succeed."

"A most wise and level-headed speech, sister of mine," said Myles, laughing, for his spirits were

rapidly reviving under the influence of Kate's cheerfulness and loving sympathy. "I will think seriously of your plan, and if nothing better turns up, why, perhaps I will make a try at it."

Then Myles told Kate of the note he had received that morning from his "nice old Oxygen gentleman," as they called him among themselves, and said that he did n't know but what he ought to accept the invitation for that evening. "My friends are becoming so few that I must do some extra cultivating of those who are left, you know," he added, with an attempt at cheerfulness.

"Are n't you ashamed to say that your friends are becoming few, when only yesterday you made a thousand new ones all at once?" replied Kate, indignantly. "At the same time, I do think you ought to dine with your Oxygen gentleman; who knows but what he may prove a fairy godfather in disguise, and your future may turn from this very evening! Yes, decidedly, you must go and dine with him, and you can come out home on the midnight train. In the meantime I shall have told father and mother all about you, so that they may be prepared to receive you with due honor."

"Be sure you tell them every thing," said Myles,

"for if you don't I shall. I am not going to row this race under any but my own true colors."

"Yes, of course, I shall have to mention the one little neglect of duty that Mr. Haxall, hateful man! has made such a mountain of; but I think it would be just as well, dear, not to say any thing about the other cause of your being dismissed. It would only make them feel badly; and, as such a thing can never possibly happen again, why, what is the use?"

Then sunny-faced Kate had to hurry away to catch her train, but she left Myles so much happier and more hopeful than he was when she knocked at his door that he could hardly realize how wretched he had been.

"I tell you what," he said to himself as he dressed for dinner, "a good sister is one of the best things a fellow can have in this world."

Myles reached the Oxygen some time before the hour set for dinner, and was in the reading-room when his friend entered.

"My dear boy, I am very glad you were able to come," said the old gentleman, advancing toward him with outstretched hand and beaming face. "I wanted to meet you this evening on purpose to con-

gratulate you. There, not a word! I know what your modesty prompts you to say; but I read the whole story in the morning paper, and have felt proud of my proxy all day. I hope the *Phonograph* people have rated you a handsome increase of salary in view of the glory you have shed upon them."

"On the contrary," said Myles, "they have dismissed me from the paper."

"Dismissed you? Impossible!"

"They did not find it so," replied Myles; "but, to tell the truth, I was not dismissed for what I did, but rather for what I did not do."

"I am extremely sorry to hear it," said the old gentleman; "extremely sorry; but let us have dinner first, and talk it all over afterward; things always look so much brighter after dinner than they do before it."

At the dinner-table Myles was in the very act of raising a glass of wine to his lips when his promise to Kate darted into his mind. With a flushed face he set the glass quickly down, saying, in answer to his companion's inquiring look, "I took a pledge today, sir, never again to touch a drop of wine, and so you will please excuse me for not breaking it."

"Excuse you for not breaking it! My dear boy, I would never excuse you if you did. It was a fine thing to do, and may you have the strength to stick to that pledge through life! No young man can have a better recommendation, when seeking to make his way in the world, than that he is strictly temperate. I even place it ahead of a character for honesty among my employés.

"Do you, then, employ many men, sir?" asked Myles, with a vague hope that something might come to him through this interview.

"Well, yes, a thousand or two, more or less," replied the other, laughing, "but not exactly in your line of business."

"I don't know that I have any line of business just at present," said Myles; and this brought them back to the subject of his dismissal from the paper. The old gentleman asked such shrewd questions, and expressed such genuine interest and sympathy, that, before he knew it, Myles was telling him the whole story exactly as he had told it to Kate.

"The city editor was perfectly right," said the old gentleman, when Myles had finished; "and I should have done exactly as he did under the circumstances.

He could not have acted otherwise, in justice to the paper or the other workers on it. Still, there were extenuating circumstances. You have profited by your lesson and have done nobly since. It seems to me that the paper will make a mistake if it loses you. Suppose I go to see this city editor and talk the matter over with him? Should you have any objections?"

"Certainly not," answered Myles; "but I can tell you beforehand that it won't do the least bit of good. Mr. Haxall never allows himself to be influenced by outsiders."

"I shall try it, at any rate, and will let you know the result on Monday," said the kindly old gentleman. Then Myles was obliged to bid him good-night and hurry off to catch the midnight train.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHO ROBBED THE SAFE?

WHILE Myles Manning was struggling with one of the great trials of his life in New York, events were taking place at Mountain Junction in which he would have been greatly interested had he known of them. In the first place, Ben Watkins' uncle, the division superintendent, had returned, and, with the powerful aid of the 50th Regiment, N. G. S. N. Y., was proceeding vigorously against the railroad strikers in that part of the country. Several leaders were arrested and locked up to await trial, but Jacob Allen, who was supposed to be chief among them, was not to be found, though every effort was made to discover his hiding-place and a large reward was offered for his apprehension. He had not been seen in town since the morning of his rescue from the jail, and, though his little house was closely watched, it could not be

discovered that he had any communication with his family. Still, the efforts for his capture were not relaxed, for the fall term of court would open at Mountain Junction on the following Monday, and it was deemed important that Allen's case, together with those of his associates, should then be tried.

The second event of interest to Myles was the return to town of Ben Watkins himself, and the consequences that followed immediately upon it. He had been released by the strikers who captured him, together with Lieutenant Easter and his command, in a town about forty miles away, and left at liberty to work his way back as best he could. This he succeeded in doing, and he reached Mountain Junction about the same time as his uncle.

Ben became greatly excited when he learned of his uncle's return and of Myles Manning's departure. He inquired at the hotel office if the latter had left any letter or package for him, and on being told that he had not the young man broke forth into a torrent of abuse, not only against Myles, but against all reporters, whom he denounced as a prying, sneaking set of fellows, unfit to be admitted into decent society.

All this was heard by several persons, including Billings, who, concealed behind his immense shirt-collar, was sitting in the hotel office. He listened quietly for a few minutes, but when Ben began to include all reporters in his abuse the little man could no longer stand it. He jumped up and, stepping squarely in front of the bully, declared that he was a reporter, and demanded that the other make an instant apology for his words, or prepare to suffer the consequences.

"And who will make me suffer, I should like to know?" cried Ben, gazing with contempt upon the absurd figure cut by this champion of reporters.

"Perhaps I will," answered Billings, affecting his languid drawl, "or perhaps I will leave it to my friend, 'Lord Steerem,' don't you know."

"You impudent puppy!" screamed Ben in a fury, now recognizing Billings as the reporter who had made him the laughing-stock of all New London. "If you were n't so small as to be beneath contempt I 'd thrash you to within an inch of your life. Now clear out of here before I hurt you, and don't you ever dare come in my way again."

"I 'm a little threshing-machine myself," answered

Billings, coolly, "and I am geared up to just about your size, Mr. Bigman. So come on if you dare. I don't care that "—snapping his fingers in Ben's face —"for you or your bluster."

Ben aimed a blow at him, which the reporter cleverly dodged. Before there was a chance for another, the by-standers, who were vastly entertained by Billings' exhibition of pluck, rushed in and separated the two, declaring that Ben ought to be ashamed of himself to strike at a fellow not half his size.

Ben sulkily left the hotel, vowing vengeance against both Billings and Myles, while the little man, who was prevented from following him, entertained his captors with the story of "Lord Steerem," the famous coxswain.

The division superintendent was a harsh man, who entertained no affection for his nephew, and had only given him his position because he was his brother's son. He suspected Ben's unfitness for the place, and had been on the point of discharging him several times. Now, when Ben entered the office, he found his uncle greatly dissatisfied with his conduct of affairs during the preceding four days.

"If it had not been for your overbearing manner and absurd display of authority," he said to Ben, "there would have been no serious outbreak here, nor any destruction of the company's property. Now I 'll trouble you for the key to the safe."

With all his known faults Ben had never been suspected of dishonesty by his uncle, who was obliged to trust his assistant implicitly in many things.

Ben hesitated a moment and then said that he had left the key in his room for greater safety, and would be obliged to go there for it.

"A pretty place your room is to leave a thing of such value!" growled the superintendent. "You should not have let it go out of your possession for an instant."

"I was afraid I might be robbed by the strikers," answered Ben.

"Nonsense! The strikers are not the sort of fellows to rob individuals. You ought to know that as well as I. Now hurry up and get the key. I must have the books out of the safe at once."

Ben left the office and in a few minutes returned. With a well assumed air of agitation he said that

the key was nowhere to be found, and that it must have been stolen from his room during his absence from town.

"Whom do you suspect of stealing it?" demanded his uncle.

"I don't suspect anybody unless it is some of the strikers."

"The strikers again! Always the strikers," sneered the other. "Well, sir, we will soon find out. If the key was stolen it was done for the purpose of robbing the safe. I shall have the lock picked, and if any thing is missing I will believe that the key was taken from your room as you say. If every thing is all right in the safe I shall be forced to believe that you have lost the key, and have trumped up this story to conceal your carelessness. In that case the position of assistant superintendent of this division will instantly become vacant, for I shall have no further use for you."

An hour later the lock was picked and the safe opened. The superintendent carefully examined its contents, taking from it every book and bundle of papers.

"Well, sir," he said, turning to Ben after satisfy-

ing himself that every thing was as he left it, "what have you to say now?"

"I don't see any money package," answered Ben, stooping and peering into the empty safe.

"Money package! What money package?"

"One containing a thousand dollars that came by express from the treasurer the day you went away. I receipted for it in your name and locked it up in the safe, but it does n't seem to be there now."

"No, I should say it was n't!" exclaimed the superintendent, rather staggered by this proof that his nephew's story of being robbed was true, and, searching his face keenly, "You are sure there is no mistake about that package?"

"Certainly not, sir. You will find a copy of the receipt I gave for it in the blotter and the sum entered in the cash-book."

Examination proved both of these statements to be true.

"Did you say that the money came from the treasurer's office?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then one or more of the bills it contained must have been marked, for that is a precaution I never knew the treasurer to neglect."

A dispatch sent to the general office of the company, informing the treasurer of the robbery and asking if any of the bills in that package could be identified, set his clerks to examining a certain little memorandum-book.

In a very short time a reply reached Mountain Junction. Yes, in package number so and so, containing one thousand dollars, sent to the division superintendent on such a date, one fifty-dollar bill was privately marked in the manner usual with the treasurer.

On the following day the division superintendent spent several hours in the only bank of Mountain Junction, where he and the cashier closely examined every fifty-dollar bill among its deposits, but none bearing the private mark of the treasurer of the railroad company was to be found. Just as they had satisfied themselves of this the proprietor of the principal hotel came in to make his weekly deposit of funds, which he always did on Saturday.

After he had gone the cashier returned to the private office in which the superintendent still sat.

"Here are two more fifties that have just come in," he said. "Perhaps you had better look at them."

The first one was not marked, but the second!

Yes, it bore the fatal sign, a tiny red cross made in a spot where it would never be detected unless a person knew just where to look for it.

"Then you 've struck the trail at last?" said the cashier.

"Yes, and I 'll follow it up close while it is fresh," answered the superintendent. "What a bit of luck it is that this very bill should be passed right here in town. Why, we 'll have the thief locked up inside of three days."

Then the superintendent went to the hotel, and taking the proprietor to one side, asked him if he could recollect taking in any fifty-dollar bills during the past week.

"Yes, I took in two of them, and have just now deposited them along with some other money in the bank," was the answer.

"Can you remember who gave them to you?"

"Oh, yes; one came from a drummer who left on Monday, the day before the strike broke out, and the other came from a New York reporter, who only went away yesterday."

"Was there any unusual circumstance attending the receipt of either of these bills?"

"No—why, yes, there was too! The reporter was an impudent young dog, and did n't have any money when I first asked him to pay his bill. He was going out of town and I made him leave his watch as security. The next morning he redeemed it and paid his bill with one of those fifties."

"Do you remember his name?"

"No; but it is on the register. Here it is. Manning; Myles Manning, New York City. I think he was a friend of your nephew. Anyhow, they had drinks together the night he came."

"Will you kindly send a messenger to my office with word that I should like to see my nephew here for a minute?"

"Certainly."

When Ben came he found his uncle sitting with the landlord in the latter's room.

"Do you know a New York reporter named Manning?" was the first question put to him.

"To be sure I do. He was in my class at X——, and was out here this week doing the strike for the *Phonograph*."

"What sort of a character does he bear?"

"Why, pretty fair, I believe; but of course I

would n't like to say any thing against an old classmate."

"In the present case if you know any thing about the young man it is your duty to tell it. He is suspected of taking that thousand dollars."

Ben gave a well-acted start of surprise.

"Oh, that can't be," he said. Myles Manning would never do such a thing as that. He may be a little wild, but he could n't be a thief."

"What do you mean by a little wild?"

"Oh, takes an occasional drink and plays a game now and then."

"Did you and he drink together the night he came here?"

"I believe we did have one or two glasses."

"Did he get drunk?"

"No, not exactly what you might call drunk."

"Did you play cards?"

"Yes, we had a game or two."

"For money?"

"Yes."

"Did Manning win?"

"Well, no, not exactly."

"Did he lose?"

"I believe he did."

"How much?"

"Pretty near all he had, I guess. At least he complained of being cleaned out."

"Did he complain of this to you?"

"Yes, and tried to borrow money of me to pay his hotel bill."

"And you refused to lend it?"

"Yes. I told him I was short myself."

"What did he say to that?"

"Oh, he got mad and said he was bound to have his money back some way."

"Did you win his money?"

"No, sir."

"Who did?"

"I think Lieutenant Easter must have won it, for he was the only one playing with us."

"While Manning was in your room did he know that the key of my safe was in your possession?"

"I think he did."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because it fell from my pocket when I drew out my handkerchief while we were playing cards, and I said then that I guessed it was not safe there, and that I should hide it in my room."

"Did he see where you put it?"

"I don't know, but he might have, for I had no thought of concealing it from him."

"Have you had any other cause to be suspicious of him?"

"Not in connection with the money."

"In connection with any thing else, then?"

"Well, he did seem to be pretty thick with the strikers."

"In what way?"

"In telling them of our plans. Both Lieutenant Easter and I thought he told them of our plan to send a train through, and so gave them the chance to capture it and us. Manning was with us, and when they asked him what he was doing there, he produced a note from Jake Allen, which said he was their friend and must be treated as such."

"How did they treat him?"

"I don't know; but he was the only one left behind when they carried us off, and that looked very suspicious to me."

"Well," said the superintendent, "from all accounts this Manning is a fellow who will bear pretty close watching. I won't say yet that he robbed my safe, but I must confess things begin to look that

way. I wish you would show me your room, Ben, and the one Manning occupied while he was here."

So the superintendent, his nephew, and the landlord went up to No. 16, where Ben showed the corner of a bureau drawer in which he said the key had been hidden. Then they went to the room that had been Myles', only three doors away. In answer to their knock Billings' voice shouted: "Come in!" He now occupied it, and was sitting up by the window writing.

"Excuse the intrusion," said the landlord, "but these gentlemen have a particular reason for wishing to see this room, and I thought perhaps you would not mind."

"Oh, not at all," answered Billings, scowling at Ben. "I will leave and let them have it all to themselves if they say so."

They did not say so, and he did not leave, but sat watching them closely and wondering what they were up to.

Ben in particular seemed anxious to examine every article of furniture in the room very closely. He looked behind the bureau and peered under the wash-stand.

"What do you expect to find?" asked his uncle.

"I don't expect to find any thing, but I thought it just possible that he might have hidden the envelope somewhere in this room if he took it. Of course he did n't, though. He would n't do such a thing. Hello! what 's this?"

As Ben uttered this exclamation he was gazing intently at the floor close to one wall of the room and near the door.

"What 's what? I don't see any thing," said his uncle, looking at the floor.

"Neither do I," replied Ben, "but I just trod on something that felt like paper under the carpet."

"Of course," broke in the landlord, "we always put paper under our carpets."

"But this has a peculiar feeling, like an extra thickness of paper."

"Why don't you look under the carpet, then, and see what it is?" asked the superintendent.

"I would rather not, uncle. He is my friend, you know."

"Nonsense! I hope he is n't your friend if what we suspect of him is true. But step out of the way and let me see what wonderful discovery you

have made. It is probably only a crease in the floor paper."

So saying the superintendent stooped, inserted his hand beneath the edge of the carpet and drew forth the identical express envelope that the package of missing bills had come in.

The three looked at each other without a word, while Billings pretended to have resumed his writing.

When they were again in the landlord's room the superintendent said :

"Proof is accumulating so fast against this Manning that I shall procure a warrant, send it on to our New York detective, and have him arrested."

"Oh, uncle, don't do it?" exclaimed Ben. "Remember that he is a gentleman, and that a thing of this kind would ruin him."

"Your kind heart does you credit, Ben, but in a case of this sort mercy must give way to justice. Yes, it is clearly my duty to have him arrested. At the same time I shall write out a full account of the affair and send it to the president of the road, so that he will get it the first thing Monday morning. He can then decide what is to be done."

The superintendent did as he proposed, and his letter was the first one President Walker Saxon, of the A. & B. Road, saw lying on his desk as he entered his office Monday morning. He had intended stopping at the office of the *Phonograph*, in which he was a stockholder, and speaking to the city editor about Myles Manning, but as it was early he changed his mind and decided that he would first go to his own office and glance over the mail.

At the same time a dispatch directed to Myles lay uncalled for in the city room of the *Phonograph*. It came from Billings, and was:

"Look sharp, old man. Suspect B. W. is making trouble for you here. Do not know yet what it is, but will post you as soon as I get on the inside track. Pretty sure I shall have to thrash him yet."

CHAPTER XIX.

REINSTATED AND ARRESTED.

TOTALLY unconscious of the storm arising so rapidly on his horizon, and the evidence that was being accumulated to prove him a thief, Myles Manning journeyed homeward that Saturday night in a comparatively cheerful frame of mind. Although he could not believe that his friend's promised interview with Mr. Haxall would do the slightest good, or cause the city editor to take him back on the paper, still it was comforting to think that so powerful a friend was interesting himself in his cause.

Why he thought of the old gentleman as a powerful friend he could not have told, for in fact he knew almost nothing about him. They had only met two or three times, and the other had so evidently avoided any reference to himself or his own affairs, that Myles felt it would be impolite to ask any questions concerning them. He knew that his

name was Saxon, that he was a graduate of X—— College, and that he was a particularly pleasant old gentleman to meet, but this was about all. So it now happened that, as he speculated concerning his friend, he was surprised to find how little knowledge he had of him.

"He must be a man of influence, though, and connected with some extensive business, if he employs men by the thousand, and of course, if he wants to, he can give me work of some kind," thought Myles.

In his present frame of mind he would gladly have accepted almost any position in any line of business. He would rather it would be newspaper work than any thing else. At the same time he hated the thought of working on any paper except the *Phonograph*.

"If they would only give me one more trial there!" he said to himself. "I should n't care how or why they took me on again; I 'd soon make them want to keep me for myself alone. Of course it would not be half so pleasant to have Mr. Haxall persuaded to try me again as to have him do so of his own free will; but I don't suppose any thing except influence would get me back there again now.

Well, Monday will soon be here, and then we 'll see what will happen."

In the little cottage that was now the home of the Manning family Myles found his mother sitting up and waiting for him. She held the front-door open as he reached it, and, after kissing him, and warning him not to make any noise that would wake his father, she said: "God bless you, my boy! we are all just as proud of you as we can be. Now go to bed, dear, for it is very late, and to-morrow we will have some nice long talks." There was not a suspicion of blame or of disappointment in her tone or manner, and Myles went to his room with a very tender feeling toward those who loved and trusted him so implicitly.

The next day they did have nice long talks, all of which ended in their taking the very brightest and most cheerful view of things. Kate pinned her faith to the "Oxygen gentleman." "I don't know why," she said, "but somehow I feel sure he will do something splendid for you, Myles. Even if he should n't, we have my plan of working together to fall back on; and the more I think of it the more I am inclined to believe we should make it succeed."

Mr. Manning listened to the several conversations without taking a very active part in them ; but once, when he and Myles were alone in the room, he said :

" You are learning one of the most difficult lessons of life, my son ; but you seem to have set about it manfully, and I believe you will finally master it. When you do, you will have acquired a knowledge of infinite value. I mean a knowledge of self-control, self-reliance, and strict obedience to the orders of your own conscience."

Thus, in spite of the fact that he was wellnigh penniless and out of work, with no certain prospect of obtaining any sort of a position, Myles returned to the city, that bright autumn Monday morning, full of hope and determination.

" I will have some sort of a place, as good if not better than the one I have lost before I come home again ! See if I don't ! " was his mental exclamation.

He went first to his lodgings. There the landlady informed him that a gentleman had called only a few minutes before, who said he wished to see him on important business, and had seemed greatly disappointed when told that he was out. He had offered to wait, but she told him he would be more

likely to catch Mr. Manning at the *Phonograph* office than anywhere else, and that he had better wait there.

"Did n't he leave any message?" asked Myles.

"No; nor a card; and he would n't even tell his name; for he said you would not know any better who he was if he did, but that he 'd meet you somewhere during the day."

"I only hope he may," said Myles, as he started up-stairs, "but I don't think it is very likely."

"Oh, Mr. Manning," called the landlady, "a letter came here for you by the mail this morning, and I laid it on your table."

"My prospects are certainly looking up," thought Myles, who was not in the habit of receiving letters at any other place than the office—"a man on important business and a letter both in one morning. I wonder who the one could have been; and who the other is from? Perhaps it is from Mr. Saxon."

It was not from his old gentleman friend, however, but was from Mr. Haxall, and was written in the *Phonograph* office on Saturday evening. It was of such an astounding nature to Myles that he could hardly believe he was reading it aright when he first

glanced over its contents. Again he read it through, and again, to make sure that there could be no mistake as to its meaning. Then he uttered such a shout of joy as startled his landlady in the distant, lowermost depths of the house. The letter was as follows:

My Dear Mr. Manning:

I want you to come back to the *Phonograph* and report for duty as usual on Monday morning. If, during our interview of to-day, I seemed unnecessarily harsh or unjust, you will please lay the blame to my position rather than to myself. I cannot go beyond the rules of the office, which oblige me to take such action as I did in your case. You were undoubtedly guilty of a neglect of duty; but I am well satisfied that such a thing will not happen again in your case. Although you failed us in that single instance, your subsequent course was such as reflects great credit upon this paper, and I am convinced that you are one of the staff with whom we cannot afford to part. Therefore, if you will return at a salary of $25 per week, or, if you prefer it, on space, you will be cordially welcomed by

Yours very truly,
Joseph Haxall,
City editor, the *Phonograph*.

"Glory hallelujah!" shouted Myles. "Go back? Of course I will! As a space man too. Well, if Joe Haxall is n't a trump then I 'm no judge. He certainly is the most just and honorable man I know.

I 'd just like to hear anybody say a word against him in my presence.

"Mr. Brown, I 'll thank you for that key again if you please, sir.

"Yes, Myles Manning, your fortune is made, and you have come out of what looked like a pretty ugly fix with flying colors.

"My, but I 'm glad that letter was written on Saturday, before there was a chance for any influence being used to get me back. How cheap a fellow must feel who, after once losing a job, only gets taken back through influence."

So thinking, and hardly able to contain himself for joy, Myles gathered together the papers he had brought away from the *Phonograph* office and prepared to carry them back to it. In his own happiness he did not forget the anxiety of those at home, and his first care upon leaving the house was to hunt up a telegraph station. From it he sent a message containing the joyful news to his mother. Then he hurried down town.

When he entered the city-room of the *Phonograph* Mr. Brown handed him the key to his desk as a matter of course. Mr. Haxall looked up from the

reading of his morning papers long enough to shake hands with him and welcome him back. Nobody else knew that only two days before he had been dismissed in disgrace. The other reporters, most of whom supposed he had just returned from Mountain Junction, crowded about to congratulate him upon the manner in which he had saved the train with the 50th Regiment on board, and to ply him with questions as to the details of that affair. To those who considered that he had snubbed them on Saturday he made ample apologies, and explained that his apparent rudeness was caused by a piece of bad news of which he had then just heard.

The first to learn of and congratulate him upon his new prospects was his stanch friend Rolfe, who had that morning returned from Chicago, and who, while shaking hands with him, said :

"Now, old fellow, you will have a chance to show what you are made of. As a space man you will reap an instant pecuniary reward from every successful effort you make, exactly as any man does who is in business for himself. You also occupy the curious position that I do not believe exists except among newspaper reporters on space, of being under

orders and at the same time able to render yourself absolutely independent of them."

Myles was so happy, and the future seemed so bright and secure to him, surrounded as he was by friendly faces, that he read Billings' telegram with only a vague wonder as to what it could mean, and without a trace of anxiety. Ben Watkins seemed so very far away, and to belong so entirely to some remote period of his life, that Myles could only think of him with pity and contempt. He had it in his power to inflict a serious injury upon Ben Watkins, if he chose, by simply telling of that scene before the safe in the superintendent's office; but what harm could Ben Watkins do him? None. Absolutely none. He had been guilty of but one wrong that Ben knew of, and that had already been amply atoned for and forgiven.

As he reached this conclusion Myles lifted his eyes to those of a stranger who stood beside him, and who asked:

"Is this Mr. Manning?"

"Yes," replied Myles, "it is."

"Mr. Myles Manning?"

"Yes, that is my name. What can I do for you?"

"You can come with me quietly and without any fuss. I am an officer, and have a warrant for your arrest on the charge of robbing a safe in the office of the A. & B. Railroad Company at Mountain Junction."

"I—charged with robbing a safe!" repeated Myles, slowly, and with a face so colorless that he looked as though about to faint. "Who dares bring such a charge against me?"

"The charge is made, I believe, by Mr. Ben Watkins, assistant division superintendent at Mountain Junction. My instructions and the warrant for your arrest were forwarded by his uncle, the division superintendent at that place," answered the detective.

"Where do you want me to go with you?" asked Myles, with a wild look in his eyes and his face still deathly pale.

"To the office of the president of the road first," answered the officer, evasively. He thought it as well not to say just yet that he was instructed to deliver his prisoner to the authorities at Mountain Junction, where he would probably be locked up to await trial.

"May I speak to the city editor for a moment?"

asked poor Myles, whose brain was in such a whirl at this terrible accusation that he hardly knew what to say or do.

"Certainly you may. I 'm never hard on my prisoners so long as they act decently and behave themselves."

This conversation had been carried on in such low tones that none of the other reporters had caught a word of it. They saw, however, by Myles' face that something very serious had happened to him, and they watched him curiously as he almost staggered toward the city editor's desk.

"Mr. Haxall," he said abruptly, "that man over there is a detective, and has a warrant for my arrest on the charge of robbing a safe. What shall I do?"

"Eh! what 's that?" exclaimed the city editor, startled for a moment from his ordinary self-possession.

Myles repeated what he had said.

"But of course it is all a mistake?"

"Of course it is, sir."

Mr. Haxall beckoned to the officer, who at once stepped to the desk.

"Don't you think you have made some mistake,

officer, and arrested the wrong person?" asked the former.

"No, sir, not if this is Myles Manning, the *Phonograph* reporter who was in Mountain Junction last week."

"Will you let me see your warrant?"

"Certainly, sir," said the officer, producing it.

"Um; this seems to be straight enough," said Mr. Haxall, glancing over it.

"It was issued in Mountain Junction, I see."

"Yes, sir."

"Will the case be tried there?"

"I believe so."

"Then I suppose you want to take Mr. Manning there?"

"Yes, sir, those are my orders; but first I am to take him to the office of the president of the road."

"Well, Manning, my poor fellow, this seems to be a very serious business," said Mr. Haxall, turning to Myles, who stood like one in a dream. "I don't see that there is any thing for it but for you to go with this officer. You may rest assured, though, that you sha'n't want for friends in this time of trouble. I will telegraph Billings to remain at Mountain Junc-

tion until the matter is settled. Furthermore, as this charge reflects upon the good name of the *Phonograph*, as well as upon yours, I think I can safely say that no money will be spared to clear you of it."

With a voice that trembled in spite of his efforts to control it Myles thanked the city editor and turned away. He mechanically locked his desk and handed the key to Mr. Brown, from whom he had so proudly received it but a few minutes before; then, accompanied by the officer, he walked from the room without a word to any of his fellows, who gazed curiously and in silence after him.

A few moments later, when the story spread among them, there was a general burst of indignation that they had permitted such an outrage as the arrest of one of their number to take place in that room. Had the detective reappeared just then he would in all probability have encountered an angry crowd of stout young fellows who would have promptly hustled him down-stairs and out of the building.

As it was, he and his prisoner were walking rapidly in the direction of Wall Street; he with a watchful eye on Myles, and Myles so full of bewil-

dered wretchedness as to be totally unconscious of whither he was being led.

The clerks in the office of the great railroad company winked at each other as he passed them, for they all knew the detective by sight, and suspected that his companion must also be his prisoner. Myles however, never noticed them. He neither seemed to see nor notice any thing until the door of an inner office was closed behind him, and he found himself in the presence of his old gentleman friend, with whom he had dined two evenings before at the Oxygen Club.

He uttered a cry of amazement. "Are you Mr. Walker B. Saxon, President of the A. & B. road?" he exclaimed.

"I am," was the reply; "and you may rest assured, my dear boy, that if I had known of this thing in time you should not have been subjected to the mortification of an arrest. I only heard of it an hour ago, and then I did not know but what the officer had already found you. I could only send orders to have you brought here before being taken to Mountain Junction. Now sit down and tell me your side of the story, and then we will see what can be done."

"But I don't even know why I am arrested," said Myles. "It is absurd to say that I robbed a safe What am I supposed to have taken from it?"

"An express package sent from this office and containing one thousand dollars."

"There was n't a sign of any such package in the safe," exclaimed Myles, impetuously. "It only contained books and papers."

An anxious look flitted across Mr. Saxon's face at this admission.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

The full import of what he had said flashed into Myles' mind. The blood rushed to his face, and he hesitated a moment before asking in turn:

"Does Ben Watkins accuse me of this crime?"

"Not directly; but he intimates that you stole the key of the safe from his room, which amounts to about the same thing."

"Then I am released from my promise to him," said Myles, "and am at liberty to tell you all I know of this miserable business."

Mr. Saxon listened with absorbed interest to the young reporter's story of his visit to the superintendent's office on that eventful night, of what took

place there between him and Ben, of his taking possession of the key for safe-keeping, and of the manner in which he sent it back. It was a long story, and when it was finished the president's face expressed a decided feeling of relief. He said:

"My dear boy, I have studied your character carefully, much more so than you are aware of, during the past four months, and I am thankful to be able to tell you honestly that I believe every word you say. What a very foolish thing you did, though, in taking possession of that key! It undoubtedly saved property of great value to this company, but at the same time it placed you in the power of your enemy as no other act could have done."

"Yes," assented Myles, "I see that only too plainly now."

"But you were short of money that night?" continued Mr. Saxon.

"Yes, sir, I was."

"And had fifty dollars the next morning? Where did it come from?"

Myles told him.

"Have you that note signed 'A friend in need' now?"

"No, sir; I lost both it and what money I had left after paying my hotel bill, on the night that I was trying to get back to town in time to warn the train."

"That 's bad. In fact, the whole combination of circumstances is the most unfortunate I ever knew. It will be very difficult to prove your innocence, though, of course, it will be done sooner or later. I would have the charge withdrawn and the whole matter hushed up even now, but for your sake. The accusation against you is already so widely known that nothing short of a public trial and triumphant acquittal can for a moment be considered. I will use my influence to have the trial come off at the earliest possible date, probably next week, and in the meantime I can think of nothing better for you to do than go quietly to Mountain Junction with the detective, procure bail, which I will see that you have no difficulty in doing, and spend the next few days in hunting up evidence for your own defence."

Thus, at four o'clock that afternoon, Myles found himself once more on his way to Mountain Junction. This time it was as a prisoner charged with robbing a safe and on his way to trial.

CHAPTER XX.

COLLECTING EVIDENCE FOR THE DEFENCE.

AS may well be imagined that westward journey was a sad one to Myles. The detective, who never for a moment lost sight of him, was not a talkative man at best, and made it a rule not to hold unnecessary conversation with his prisoners. Thus Myles was left to his own thoughts, and the more he pondered upon his situation the more complicated and hopeless it seemed to him. Who had sent him that money? Could it have been Ben Watkins? He hated to think that his old classmate could do so mean a thing as that, and even if he were sure of it how could it be proved? He no longer had the note that came with the money, and he did not believe its sender could be traced if he could produce it; for it was probably written in a disguised hand. Still, it would help prove that the $50 had been sent to him, and its post-mark would give the date.

Yes, it would be a most important bit of evidence in his favor if it could only be found. But he had not the slightest idea what had become of it; he had not even discovered its loss until he was starting away from Mountain Junction, and had felt for money with which to purchase his ticket to New York. Billings had bought that for him without exactly understanding how his friend happened to be without money, and had loaned him a few dollars besides. No, it was not likely the note ever would be found.

How, then, could he prove his innocence? To be sure, he had powerful friends who stood ready to help him, but all the friends in the world could not clear his name from disgrace unless this horrible charge against him could be disproved. Supposing it should not be? Why, his whole life would be ruined, that was all. Who would care to associate with a thief, or even one suspected of being such? Who would give him employment? Yes, his career was blasted. He might as well, or better, be dead. What would they say at home? Would it kill his mother? As yet they had no suspicion of this overwhelming disgrace. How could he dash their

fond hopes by letting them know of it? He could not. And yet, suppose they should hear of it through some other channel!

Thus the poor boy thought and puzzled and despaired over his situation until it seemed as though there was no hope nor happiness left in the world. He felt like one already tried, found guilty, and sentenced to a lifetime of disgrace. At last, about midnight, he fell into a troubled sleep. When he next awoke the detective was bending over him and saying that Mountain Junction was in sight.

The train had hardly stopped at the well-remembered station before there was a commotion at the car-door, and a little man, whose presence seemed in a moment to pervade the whole car, rushed in, elbowing his way with remarkable dexterity through the crowd of passengers who were leaving it. They growled at him, but they gave way and made room for him to pass, as all crowds will before any one who has the self-assurance to push himself forward. In a moment he caught sight of Myles, and called out:

"Good enough, old man! You 're a trump to come back and face the music. Now we will have some fun."

Here the detective stepped in front of Myles, and said sternly:

"That will do, sir. I can't allow any communication with my prisoner."

"Your prisoner!" cried Billings—for of course it was he. "Well, that 's a go! What is he your prisoner for, I 'd like to know? And what 's the matter with my interviewing him? Is he an anarchist or a horse-thief? Whatever he is you can't stop me from talking to him unless you muzzle me, and you can't muzzle me, for I represent the press, and it 's against the law to muzzle the press in this country. Oh, no, my friend, if you think you are in Russia you are mightily mistaken. You are in a country of freeborn American reporters, and when one of them sets out to interview your prisoner, or even yourself, you 've got to submit quietly to the process, or else you 'll find yourself up a pretty tall tree in less than no time. So step to one side, if you please, and let me speak to this gentleman."

Bewildered and overwhelmed by this torrent of words the detective actually did step aside, muttering if the gentleman was a reporter of course that made a difference.

"And I am his lawyer," said another voice behind them. "Of course you cannot object to an interview between your prisoner and his counsel."

As the officer looked around to see who would be the next to claim the privilege of speaking with his prisoner, the gentleman who said he was a lawyer, but who wore the uniform of a soldier, stepped past him and held out his hand to Myles.

It was Captain Ellis, of the 50th Regiment, the one who had been with him when he sent back that key.

"Yes," he said, laughing at Myles' bewilderment, "I am your lawyer, or, rather, I am four lawyers all in one, for I have already received four retainers to act as your counsel. I retained myself as soon as I heard of your little difficulty, and was glad enough of the chance to offer my services to one who had offered his so freely to me. Then I was retained by the boys of the 50th, for the regiment has taken up your case as its own, and is determined to see you through regardless of expense. They are also glad of an opportunity to be of service to you, and their only regret is that they were compelled to return to New York last night without waiting to give you

another reception. Next I was retained by our friend Billings here, on behalf of the *Phonograph*. Last of all I received a retainer just now by telegraph from a New York friend who does not wish his name mentioned, but who evidently takes a deep interest in your case."

"And now, Mr. Detective," said Billings, who seemed to have taken the entire management of affairs into his own hands, "if you will join our little party of four lawyers, one captain, one prisoner, and one reporter, and come up to the hotel for breakfast our happiness will be complete."

The detective went, of course, for nobody ever refused Billings any thing, and, though the little fellow worried and puzzled and made fun of him from the time they sat down to table until they rose from it, he completely won his heart. The officer said afterwards that, when it came time for Mr. Billings to be arrested, he hoped some one besides himself would be sent to do it, for the little chap would laugh the chief himself out of the job before it was begun.

Amid all this merriment in company with these friends poor Myles' mountain of trouble rapidly

decreased in size until its difficulties did not appear so very insurmountable after all.

As soon as breakfast was over the whole party went to court, where, after a very brief preliminary examination, Myles was admitted to bail and the date of his trial was fixed for the following Monday. He was amazed at the ease with which the whole business was transacted. There seemed to be a dozen men ready and anxious to sign his bail-bond, though only two were needed.

When this formality had been disposed of, Myles and his friends, bidding the detective good-bye, returned to the hotel, where, in Billings' room, they held a consultation as to what was to be done next.

After listening attentively to his client's story, and asking him many questions, the soldier-lawyer became convinced that the real thief was Ben Watkins, but that, under the circumstances, this was going to be very difficult to prove.

"If ever there was a guilty-looking chap in this world," said Billings, "it was that same Watkins when he found, or rather pretended to find, that envelope under the carpet in this very room. He watched me all the time he was making believe look

in other places, and when he saw that his companions were about to leave the room he walked right to the place where the envelope was and stopped there as readily as though it were lying out in plain sight. If he did n't put it there himself then I 'm a billy goat, that 's all."

"What we have got to do," said Captain Ellis, thoughtfully, "is to get hold of Jacob Allen, if possible, for I fancy that his testimony would be very important. Then if we could by some happy chance discover the note signed by 'A Friend in Need,' it would be a great piece of luck. We must also find out every thing we can about Ben Watkins and his mode of life since he came to this place. This last I will make my especial business, while I want you two to use every possible effort you can think of to find Allen and that note."

To Myles a search for either of these seemed hopeless, and even the sanguine Billings acknowledged that the assignment was a tough one.

"Still, it 's your first job of space work, old man," he said cheerfully to Myles, "and it won't do to give it up without a big try."

Myles first duty was to write home a full account

of his present trouble, for he had decided that this was, after all, the best thing to do. He made as light of it as he could, and took the most hopeful view possible of the situation; but he did not conceal any thing. He was afterwards thankful enough that he did this, for, by some means or other, a very exaggerated report of the case got into one of the New York papers the next day, and somebody took pains to send a marked copy of it to Mrs. Manning.

Myles also wrote a letter, of which he said nothing to either of his companions, to Mr. Saxon. It contained a request which was so promptly granted that two days later he received an answer which apparently gave him great satisfaction as he read it.

He saw but little of Ben Watkins during this week, for Ben was out of town most of the time, and even when he was not, both he and Myles carefully avoided meeting each other.

In the meantime Myles and Billings made two trips out to the lonely little cabin in which the former had found shelter on the night that he lost the "Friend-in-Need" note they were now anxious to discover. Both times they found the cabin closed and deserted, and, though they lingered

in its vicinity for several hours, they saw nothing of the man named Bill who lived there. Still, the place did not have the air of being abandoned. They even felt almost certain from what they saw that it was occupied between the times of their visits, and once Myles was confident that he heard Tige barking at a distance up on the mountainside. The locality seemed to have a peculiar fascination for Billings, and Myles found it difficult to get him away each time that they visited it.

"There 's something here, old man," said the little reporter; "something that I want. I feel it in my bones, but I can't tell where or what it is."

The study of Billings' character interested Myles greatly, and served largely to divert his thoughts from the unpleasant contemplation of his approaching trial. The little man had sent to New York for a trunkful of clothes, and was no longer obliged to borrow shirts and collars many sizes too large for him. On the contrary, he now dressed with the same attention to detail that Myles had noticed when they first met. When about the hotel he was the same languid, tired-appearing individual, apparently indifferent to all that was going on about

him, that he appeared in New York. When, however, he was on duty and engaged in some difficult undertaking, like the present search for the lost note, he was another being. He became wide-awake, alert, sharp-witted, and so brimful of cheerfulness that it continually bubbled over in laughter and bright sayings. To Myles he was a true friend, a charming companion, and a constant puzzle.

On the day that Myles received the letter from Mr. Saxon he inclosed it in an envelope with one written by himself, and took them to Jacob Allen's cottage, in which the striker's wife and little Bob still remained. The child was playing outside, and its mother sat in the door-way sewing. Myles lifted his hat as he asked:

"Is this Mrs. Allen?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did your husband tell you of what an escape little Bob there had a week or so ago?"

"Indeed he did, sir, and it makes me tremble now to think of it. The child was saved by a New York reporter. God bless him!"

"Yes," said Myles, flushing a little, "I know it, for I am the reporter who was fortunate enough to be on hand just in time."

"You, sir! Are you Mr. Manning?" cried the woman, starting from her chair and gazing eagerly in Myles' face.

"Yes, that is my name."

"Well, sir, I 've wanted badly to see you and thank you with my own lips, and I would have done so too but for the trouble that has come to my man. They are watching me that close in the hope of me leading them to him that I can't stir from the house without being followed. But oh, sir, I 'm proud to see you, and thankful, and may a mother's blessing follow you all the years of your life for the brave deed you did that night!"

"I did n't come here to be thanked or praised, Mrs. Allen," said Myles, considerably embarrassed by the woman's warmth of manner, "though I am much obliged to you for your kind words. I came to ask a favor of you."

"Ask a thousand, sir, and if it lies in my power I 'll be only too glad of the chance to grant them all."

"Well, perhaps you will find it hard to grant even the one I am going to ask," said Myles, smiling. "It is that you will take this letter and contrive some

means of getting it to your husband within the next three days. If you can do that you will indeed be conferring a favor, for I am in a great trouble that I believe your husband can help me out of."

"And him with a price on his head!" exclaimed the woman, regarding the letter doubtfully, as though it might contain something dangerous to her husband's safety.

"I know it," said Myles, "and I realize that it may be very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to get this letter to him. I know though that you will undertake it for the sake of what I was able to do for little Bob, and because your husband would want you to if he knew of it."

"Of course, sir, I 'll gladly take the letter and get it to him if I have the chance. I only hesitated because of the unlikelihood of having it in his hands within the time you named. I 'm watched so close. There comes one of them now. Give me your letter quick and go your way, sir, before the spy suspects what we are talking of."

"Very well, madam," said Myles loud enough for the man who was sauntering slowly past the house and watching them closely to hear, "I am sorry I

can't sell you one of our sewing-machines on the installment plan. But here is a circular containing the address, and if you ever feel inclined to give the machine a trial, just drop us a postal."

"Thank you, sir," answered the woman, with a ready comprehension. "If I 'm ever in a way to buy a machine I 'll give you the first chance to sell it to me."

As she spoke she turned to go into the house, and Myles, again lifting his hat, bade her good afternoon and walked away.

He felt satisfied that he had done a good stroke of business, and was almost certain that, by some means, Mrs. Allen would contrive to have his letter conveyed to her husband within the time named.

While Myles was thus engaged Billings was also perfecting a plan that he proposed to carry out alone that very night. As he was already at work upon it when Myles returned to the hotel the latter could not find his versatile companion, and wondered where he was. This wonder increased when he did not appear at supper-time, and had not been seen or heard from at eleven o'clock, when, tired of waiting for him, Myles went to bed.

It was broad daylight when he awoke with a start to find a most disreputable, dirty, and weary-looking, but triumphant Billings standing at his bedside, and holding out for his inspection a soiled and crumpled envelope. As he took it wonderingly, a folded paper dropped from it. It was the identical note signed "A Friend in Need" they had been so anxious to obtain, but which they had given up for lost.

"Good for you, Billings!" he cried joyfully. "But when, where, and how did you get it?"

"Last night, where you lost it, and by asking for it," replied Billings, soberly.

"Oh, come, old man, you know what I mean. Sit down and tell me all about it, there 's a good fellow."

"Well," said Billings, pretending he was not just as anxious to tell his story as Myles was to hear it, "if I must I suppose I must, but"—here he gave a prodigious yawn—"I 'm powerful sleepy. You see I wanted to get hold of that bit of paper, and I was pretty certain if it still existed it would be found in the possession of your cabin friend Bill. So last evening I took a walk out that way. I got to the place about sunset, and, as usual, it was closed and

deserted. Then I just lay low and waited. I have had many a lonely night-watch in the city since I became a reporter, waiting for some folks to die, for others to be born, and for more to be arrested, but that wait out there in the woods, with only the hoot-owls for company, beat them all for pure, unadulterated loneliness. Scared! I never was so scared in my life, and the noises that scared me most were generally made by crickets or frogs, or other wild beasts of that kind.

"However, they say all things come to him who waits, and so all sorts of things came to me; among them a man and a dog."

"Bill and Tige," interrupted Myles.

"How do you know? Were you there?"

"Go on," laughed the other, "I won't interrupt again."

"Well, they were Bill and Tige, and without suspecting my presence, they went into the cabin.

"After giving them time to get something to eat and settle down a bit, I went to the door and knocked. At the same time I called out: 'Hello, Bill! Hang on to Tige, for I 'm coming in'; and in I went.

"'Who are you?' said Bill, holding on to Tige with all his might.

"'A New York reporter, come to interview you,' said I.

"That tickled him so that he nearly let go of Tige with laughing. Then we had a nice long talk. I told him exactly what I wanted, and what I wanted it for.

"At first he said he had n't got the letter, and did n't know any thing about it, but when I told him that if he 'd give it to me no questions would ever be asked about the money, he finally pulled it out of his pocket and handed it over.

"Then I told him I wanted him to come to the trial and testify as to how the letter came into his possession, and how much money there was in it when Tige found it lying on the ground in front of the cabin where you dropped it. If he does n't he knows I will tell where his moonshine distillery is."

"Billings, you are a born detective."

"I 'm better than that. I 'm a born reporter, though a mighty hungry, sleepy, and tired one just at this minute."

"WHO ARE YOU?" SAID BILL, HOLDING ON TO TIGE WITH ALL HIS MIGHT. (*Page* 310.)

CHAPTER XXI.

A DAY OF TRIAL.

DURING the week that preceded his trial Myles did not care to be seen on the streets more than he could help. It was very unpleasant to be recognized and pointed out as the reporter who had robbed a safe, and to have people turn and stare at him. So he spent most of the time in his room consulting with his friends or reading and answering the long letters from home that either his mother or Sister Kate wrote to him every day. These were of the greatest comfort to him, and more than any thing else enabled him to bear cheerfully the painful suspense of this time of waiting.

His case was to be called on Monday, and on Sunday afternoon, feeling a great desire for exercise and fresh air, Myles went for a long walk up the side of a mountain, back of the town. He climbed nearly to the top, and then sat down to enjoy the quiet

beauty of the panorama outspread before him. The maples wore their brilliant autumn dresses and splashed the landscape with irregular patches of scarlet and gold; in and out among them wound the gleaming steely blue of a river; white farm-houses and red barns dotted the fields that stretched back from it, and the quiet town lay as though asleep at his feet. The whole glowing picture, bathed in waves of unclouded sunlight, was bordered by a soft blue frame of dim encircling mountains.

Lulled by the influence of the scene Myles fell into a reverie, from which he was roused by a rustling in the bushes close beside him. Before he could move from his position they were parted, and from them stepped a little boy, hatless, ragged, and barefooted. The child looked earnestly at the young reporter for a moment, and then, without a word, thrust a bit of paper into his hand. Almost as he did so he sprang back into the bushes and disappeared. There was a slight rustle and all was still as before. Myles curiously unfolded the bit of paper thus left with him and saw that it contained a few words written with a lead-pencil. They were :

"Yours received. Will be on hand when wanted. Would have come anyhow for little Bob's sake.

"Hastily but gratefully yours, J. A."

Myles' plan had worked, and Jacob Allen would appear to testify in his behalf. The news was too good to keep. He must go at once and tell it to Captain Ellis and Billings. Hurrying down the narrow pathway Myles had nearly reached the foot of the mountain, when, without a warning, he found himself face to face with Ben Watkins. There was a moment of embarrassed hesitation, and then, moved by a sudden impulse, Myles exclaimed:

"What is it all for, Ben? Why are you trying to ruin me?"

"I think I should be the one to ask why have you tried to ruin me ever since we first met," replied Ben, bitterly.

"I try to ruin you, Ben Watkins!" cried Myles, amazed at the charge. "Such an idea never entered my head. I tried to save you from yourself that night we met in your uncle's office; but I never even wished to harm you in my life."

"You did n't, eh?" sneered Ben. "Who was my rival in the college crew? Who made me the laugh-

ing-stock of all the fellows at New London? Who took the key to the safe, promising to return it before it should be called for, and then failed to keep that promise? Who did all these things if not you, Myles Manning?"

"All that is absurd, Ben, and you know it. Our college rivalry was an honorable one and could do no harm to either of us. I had nothing whatever to do with that New London affair, and was as greatly surprised at the way it turned out as you were. In regard to the safe business, I own that my taking that key was a mistake. I did it, though, with the idea of saving you from committing a crime, and I returned it the moment I learned that your uncle had come back."

"You returned it too late all the same."

"Well, I am very sorry, and am willing to make a full explanation of that affair to your uncle, taking the blame so far as possible upon myself. But, Ben, you know I never took that money."

"I don't know any thing about the money except that it was in the safe that night. You took the key away and when the safe was next opened it was gone."

"Is that the story you are going to swear to to-morrow?"

"I shall swear to the facts," answered Ben, evasively.

"And supposing your testimony sends me to prison for a crime you know I never committed?"

"I shall be very sorry, of course, to see an old classmate in such a fix; but I don't know what I can do to help it. The law must take its course."

"You will live to regret this, Ben. Take my advice: straighten this matter out while there is yet time and before it goes any further," said Myles, earnestly.

"I think the chances are that the regrets will be on your side rather than on mine, and as for your advice, Mr. Reporter, I have not asked it, nor do I want it," replied Ben, roughly.

As he spoke he pushed past Myles and went on his way, while the other continued on into the town, with a heavy heart.

The day of the trial broke bright and fair. Soon after breakfast the sheriff called at the hotel for Myles and took him to the court-house. Billings, in his capacity of reporter, was allowed to accompany his friend. The case had excited great interest in

the town, and long before the court-room doors were opened they were surrounded by an eager crowd of would-be spectators. After the judge, jury, lawyers, and reporters had been admitted by a back door, and were in their places, the great front-door was thrown open and the crowd rushed in, almost instantly, occupying every available space.

The court was declared open for business, and the judge announced that the case for its present consideration was that of the A. & B. Railroad Company against Myles Manning, and asked if both sides were ready for trial.

Both Captain Ellis and the counsel for the company answering that they were, Myles was ordered to stand up. He did so, and the judge, looking keenly at him through his spectacles, said:

"Myles Manning, you stand accused of robbing the safe in the office of the division superintendent of the A. & B. Railroad, at this place, of an express package containing one thousand dollars. What have you to say to this charge? Are you guilty, or not guilty?"

"Not guilty!" answered Myles in a clear, steady voice, gazing full into the face of the judge.

"Let the case proceed," said the latter, settling himself comfortably back in his big arm-chair.

Myles resumed his seat, and the counsel for the company opened the case with a brief address to the jury, stating its nature and what he hoped to prove concerning it.

The first witness called was the landlord of the hotel, who identified Myles as having registered at his house on the very day that the date of the express package showed it to have reached Mountain Junction. He testified that Myles and Ben Watkins were apparently on friendly terms, and that, during the evening while they were together in the latter's room, a quantity of wine was ordered up there. Then he described how, in the evening of the following day, as Myles was about to go out of town, he had presented his bill for five dollars, and his guest claimed to have no money with which to pay it; how he had left his watch as security; how the next morning he had presented a fifty-dollar bill to be changed, at the same time ordering him—the landlord—in a most offensive manner to take his pay out of that and return the watch immediately. Then he testified to depositing that bill in the bank on the

following Saturday; to the visit of himself, the superintendent, and Ben Watkins, to the room formerly occupied by Myles—and to the discovery in it of the empty express envelope beneath the carpet. This witness was allowed to go without cross-examination.

The next witness called was Lieutenant Easter, who, as befitting the importance of the occasion, appeared in full uniform, and created no little merriment by tripping over his dangling sword as he mounted the stand.

His answers were rambling and incoherent, but his testimony was to the effect that on the evening of Mr. Manning's arrival at the hotel he had joined him and Mr. Watkins in a game of cards in the latter's room; that Mr. Manning played recklessly, drank heavily, and lost his money carelessly, declaring that he knew where to get plenty more, or words to that effect. He testified to the dropping of the safe-key from Ben's pocket, but did not know what he did with it after that. He also uttered his belief that Myles was in league with the strikers, and had furnished them with information they could not otherwise have obtained.

Captain Ellis sharply cross-examined this witness, and drew from him the facts that both he and Ben Watkins had kept perfectly sober on the evening in question, that they played cards long enough to win all the money Myles had, and that they then carried him to bed. He was also forced to acknowledge that he had at different times won large sums of money from Ben Watkins, whose note for two hundred dollars he held at one time.

"Do you still hold that note?" asked Captain Ellis.

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because it has been paid."

"When was it paid?"

"On the day I left this place, when Mr. Watkins and I were prisoners together in the hands of the strikers."

"Why did Mr. Watkins choose that time to redeem his note?"

"He said he was afraid he would be robbed, and he wanted me to share the risk with him."

"Did it take all the money he had to pay that note?"

"No, sir."

"How much did he have left?"

"I don't know."

"A hundred dollars?"

"I should think more than that."

"Did he have five hundred?"

"I should think so."

"That will do, Mr. Lieutenant. I expect after this disclosure of your true character you will find it rather difficult to get anybody to play cards with you again in this vicinity."

The once pompous but now crestfallen little lieutenant hurriedly took his seat amid the titters and contemptuous glances of the spectators.

Several bell-boys and servants of the hotel testified to Myles' condition on the night of his arrival and the morning after, also to the fact that he had gambled and been a loser.

The telegraph operator was made, very unwillingly, to describe Myles' agitated manner on the second evening that he was in town, upon his return from Mr. Watkins' office. He also testified that Myles had telegraphed to his paper for money, and had acknowledged himself to be so short of funds that he

had been obliged to leave his watch at the hotel as security for a two days' board-bill.

The famous fifty-dollar bill was shown, and the treasurer's private mark on it was pointed out to each one of the jury. The division superintendent identified the mark on the bill as being that of the treasurer of the road, while the bank cashier identified the bill as one deposited by the landlord of the hotel.

The examination of these witnesses occupied the entire morning, and when, at noon, the court took a recess, public opinion had set pretty strongly against poor Myles, and many persons confidently predicted that he would serve a term in the penitentiary.

Even Myles himself was greatly depressed by the seeming weight of testimony against him; but Billings was as cheerful as a cricket.

"Why, my dear boy," he cried, "the more evidence they pile up the more fun it will be for us to knock it down! You just wait till the captain begins to pour in his hot shot; if he don't make them hunt their cyclone cellars then I 'm a clam, that 's all."

When court was opened again after the recess,

there was a general air of curiosity and expectation visible on all faces. The most important witness for the company had not yet been examined, and his testimony was awaited with eager interest. There was, therefore, quite a little flutter of excitement noticeable when Ben Watkins was called to the stand.

He took his place with a defiant air, as though he knew exactly what he was going to say, and would like to see the man who would get any thing more or less out of him. Still, when he took the oath to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," it was observed that he became very pale, and that his hands trembled. It was but for a moment, and then he regained a perfect self-control.

The usual questions as to his occupation and duties were asked and readily answered. Then, how long had he and Mr. Manning been friends?

"We were never friends," replied Ben.

"But you have been acquainted with him for some time?"

"Yes; we were classmates at X—— College."

"You greeted him cordially and treated him as a friend upon his arrival here some two weeks ago?"

"Of course; I was glad to see an old classmate, and tried to make his stay here as pleasant as possible."

"You have heard the testimony of Lieutenant Easter in regard to the events of that first evening. Does your recollection of those events agree with his?"

"It does."

"Did the accused become intoxicated upon that occasion?"

"He did."

"And gamble away his money recklessly?"

"He did."

"Did he try to borrow money from you the next day?"

"Yes."

"Did you lend it to him?"

"No; for I knew he would only gamble it away."

"Did he know that you had the key to your uncle's safe in your possession and that you were in the habit of concealing it in your room!"

"I believe he did."

"Now, tell us in your own way what happened between you and him on the following evening."

"Well, feeling somewhat uneasy about the safety of the railroad building I went down there late in the evening—about eleven o'clock, I think. I took a memorandum-book from the safe and was sitting at my uncle's desk looking it over, when suddenly Manning entered the office. He said he wanted a hand-car with which to run to a telegraph station a few miles out on the road and send a dispatch to his paper. I, of course, agreed to let him have it, but tried to dissuade him from going on account of the dangerous nature of the trip.

"While we were talking he stepped behind me, and the first thing I knew he was looking into the open safe. I told him that was against the rules, and that I could not allow even him to remain in that position. He laughed and said, 'That 's all right,' but did not move away. Then I tried to push him a little to one side, so that I could close the safe-door. He resisted, and we had something very like a wrestling-match. At last we both fell to the floor, overturning the table on which the lamp stood as we did so.

"Manning was underneath, and he said, 'Let me up, Ben; we have carried this joke far enough.' I

said, 'All right, I 'm glad if it is only a joke,' and let him up. When I had re-lighted the lamp Manning left, saying that he must go to the hotel for something and would meet the hand-car at the station. Then I restored the office to order, locked the safe, and went out to see about the car."

"Do you think any thing was taken from the safe at that time?"

"No; I am certain there was not."

"What did you do after ordering the hand-car?"

"I made the round of the buildings, caused the arrest of a striker whom I found lurking near one of them, helped extinguish a fire that broke out in one of the shops, and then, utterly exhausted, returned to my room and went to bed."

"Where was the key of the safe when you last saw it that night?"

"In its usual hiding-place, beneath a pile of clothing in a corner of one of my bureau drawers."

"Was the door of your room locked?"

"It was; but the keys to all the rooms are the same."

"Did Manning occupy a room near yours?"

"His was only three doors away."

"Did you sleep soundly?"

"I slept like a log until it was nearly time for a train we were about to run out to start. I had but a few minutes in which to dress and reach the station."

"Did you take the key of the safe with you?"

"No; in my hurry I forgot even to look and see if it was still where I had placed it."

"When did you first learn that the money was missing?"

"Not until late the next day, when I returned from that trip. Then I found my uncle in his office. He asked me for the safe key. I went to my room for it and discovered that it was gone. My uncle had the lock picked and we found that the package of money that had been in the safe when I last opened it was also gone."

Ben Watkins was asked many other questions, all of which he answered without hesitation, and then he was turned over to Captain Ellis for cross-examination.

For two hours the captain plied him with questions designed to confuse him and cause him to contradict himself, but without success. He stuck to

the story that he had already told and could not be made to take back or alter one word of it.

When asked how he happened to have so much money about him on the day that he paid Lieutenant Easter's note he answered that he only had about three hundred dollars in all; but that it looked like more because it was in small bills. This money he claimed to have saved from his salary and to have won at cards.

Thus the case stood when court was adjourned; and by this time there was hardly one among the spectators who was not fully convinced of Myles Manning's guilt.

As for Myles himself, he was utterly bewildered and in despair. If a witness, under oath, could so deliberately tell falsehood after falsehood, what chance was there for the truth to prevail? He had to acknowledge also that even the *true* facts of the case, as thus far brought to light, were greatly against him.

The poor fellow was separated from his friends that night and forced to spend it in a small locked room in the sheriff's house. It seemed almost like a prison cell, and this fact, together with the tumult

of his own unhappy thoughts, completely banished sleep. So all night long he tossed on his narrow bed, longing for the light of the day that was to decide his fate.

CHAPTER XXII.

TRIUMPHANTLY ACQUITTED.

WHEN Myles appeared in the court-room the next morning it was with a pale face and heavy eyes after the anxious weariness of his sleepless night. He brightened somewhat under the influence of Billings' cheering presence and words, and was comforted by his lawyer's cordial hand-grasp and confident manner.

The counsel for the company announced that he was satisfied to rest his case upon the evidence already in. Then Captain Ellis, addressing the jury, said:

"You have listened patiently, gentlemen, to the charges brought against my client and the testimony offered to prove them true. Now I beg to claim your attention for a very short time to the testimony which I shall produce to disprove those charges, and show them to be based in part, if not wholly, upon falsehood and perjury."

The captain then gave a rapid sketch of the former relations existing between Myles Manning and Ben Watkins. In conclusion he said:

"I shall not undertake to disprove that my client acted foolishly or wrongly upon the evening of his arrival at this place, though I might easily show how he was tempted and led on from one act of folly to another by those who sought his ruin. I shall, however, endeavor to prove beyond a doubt that he never sought by a dishonest or dishonorable word or action to conceal his folly or undo its effects. He had already confessed it, and fully atoned for it, before this cruel charge was brought against him."

The captain first called and examined several witnesses who testified that Ben Watkins had owed them sums of money amounting in all to several hundred dollars, and that all of these debts had been paid within a week.

Having disposed of these witnesses, Captain Ellis said:

"I shall now place my client on the stand in order that the gentlemen of the jury may hear his side of the story from his own lips. When he has told it,

I shall bring proof that what he has said is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Myles' account of all that had happened to him since his arrival at Mountain Junction was listened to with intense interest, though at some points a general expression of disbelief swept over the faces of his hearers. It was hard for them to believe that he could have overthrown Ben Watkins during the struggle between them in the superintendent's office, for Ben looked the larger and stronger of the two young men.

Myles was, of course, subjected to a searching cross-examination by the other side, but he bore it unflinchingly, answering every question without hesitation, and without once contradicting himself.

When he was finally allowed to resume his seat, a buzz of approval came from the spectators, but it was promptly checked by the sheriff. Captain Ellis smiled as he heard it, and Billings nodded his head approvingly toward the spectators. It was evident to them that the tide of public feeling was turning in their favor.

Myles started as he heard the name of the next witness. It was Mr. Herbert Smedley, and Myles

could hardly trust the evidence of his eyes when the handsome, self-possessed young fellow whom he had regarded as the wealthiest and most aristocratic of all his classmates nodded jauntily to him from the witness-stand. Myles could only remember how unkindly Bert had seemed to treat him when they last met, and wonder at his presence in this place. His surprise was increased when, in answer to Captain Ellis' first question, he heard Bert declare himself to be the step-son of Mr. Saxon, the President of the A. & B. Road.

"Have you known Mr. Manning long?" was asked.

"Ever since we entered college together, nearly four years ago."

"Was he known in college as an athlete?"

"I should say he was. He was the pride of the gymnasium."

"Did he ever engage in wrestling-matches?"

"Whenever he had a chance. But he could n't find his match in college."

"Did you ever see him wrestle with Mr. Watkins?"

"Who—Ben? Of course I did; and he threw him every time too."

At this the buzz among the spectators almost broke out in open applause. Manning stock was evidently on the rise.

"Now," said Captain Ellis, when the sensation produced by Bert Smedley's testimony had subsided, "I shall call a witness by whom I hope to prove that part of my client's story in which he described how the money that enabled him to pay his hotel bill came into his possession. Mr. William Biggs will please take the stand."

At the sound of his name the big, uncouth-looking fellow whom Myles at once recognized as his cabin acquaintance, Bill, shuffled awkwardly toward the place pointed out to him. He was closely followed by the bull-dog Tige, who, however, was not noticed until he was seated close by his master's side on the witness-stand.

"Put that dog out of the room," commanded the judge, sternly.

The sheriff started forward to obey the order, but hesitated at Tige's ominous growl and display of teeth.

"He won't do no harm, Jedge. He 's a lamb, Tige is, onless he 's riled. But it 's resky to rile

him," said Bill, facing his Honor and quieting the dog at the same time.

So Tige was allowed to remain where he was, though every now and then he expressed his disapproval of the proceedings by a low growl.

Bill, who fortunately was able to read, identified the "Friend-in-Need" note, and described how it came into his possession.

Then Captain Ellis read the note aloud, and handed it to the clerk of the court to be filed as evidence.

The appearance of Bill and Tige on the witness-stand was as good as a circus to the spectators, and they appreciated it thoroughly.

Now they wondered what new sensation was in store for them, but they were not allowed to wonder long. The opposing counsel had hardly finished his cross-examination of Bill, whose answers were such as to completely baffle him, when Captain Ellis said:

"Now, your Honor and gentlemen of the jury, I am about to place upon the stand a person who was actually present at the famous wrestling-match so graphically described by both my client and Mr. Watkins. As their accounts differ very materially

from each other, it is possible that the testimony of this witness may indicate which version of the affair is the true and which the false one. Is Jacob Allen in court? and, if so, will he please step forward?"

There was a moment of waiting, during which the spectators exchanged looks of surprise. Then, from the extreme back part of the room, Jacob Allen, the leader of the late strike, the man for whose arrest a reward was offered, appeared among them, and the crowd made way for him to pass.

As he stepped to the stand and turned a fearless gaze upon those before him, the lawyer for the company sprang to his feet and said:

"I object, your Honor, to the testimony of this man being received. His recent outrages have placed him in the position of a criminal for whose apprehension the company that I have the honor to represent offers a large reward, and for whom officers are now in search. In the name of the President of the A. & B. Railroad Company, I demand his immediate arrest."

"Your Honor," said Captain Ellis, "if I am not mistaken, Mr. Allen has in his possession a paper

that not only relieves him from all fear of arrest, but grants him unconditional pardon for any alleged act of wrong committed against the A. & B. Railroad Company."

"If you have such a paper as this gentleman suggests, I shall be pleased to examine it," said the judge, turning to Allen.

The latter handed him a letter, which the judge read carefully. When he had finished it, he said:

"This letter not only contains a withdrawal of all charges against Jacob Allen, together with that of the reward offered for his apprehension, but it restores him to his old position as conductor on the A. & B. Road. It is signed by Walker B. Saxon, President, with whose signature I am perfectly familiar. Under these circumstances I shall be obliged to admit the testimony of this witness as legal evidence."

So Jacob Allen was sworn, and allowed to tell his story. He told first how Myles Manning had rescued his boy from imminent peril, and how, out of gratitude, he had given him a pass that would insure him courteous treatment at the hands of any striker he might meet. He denied that Myles had

ever afforded any information or aid to the strikers. He mentioned meeting the young reporter on the street the evening after that of little Bob's rescue and hearing him inquire if he had seen any thing of Mr. Watkins. He told how, upon learning from him that the assistant superintendent was in his office, Mr. Manning had asked him to wait there a minute until he should return, and had entered the railroad building.

"Did you wait?" asked Captain Ellis.

"Yes, sir; I waited until I heard such a scuffling and crashing of furniture up there in the office that I felt it was time to go up and see if anybody was getting hurt."

"What did you see?"

"I did n't see any thing, for the light was out, but as I reached the office door, which was open, I heard Mr. Manning say, as nearly as I can repeat his words,

"'Ben Watkins, I hope you realize that you are whipped, and that I have saved you from committing a State-prison offence. I don't know why you wanted to set fire to this building, but it looks as if you wished to destroy the contents of that safe in

such a way that the blame should be laid upon the strikers. I don't know what those contents are, but they must be of value to the company. It is evident that you are not fit to be trusted with them. If you will put them back, lock the safe, and give me the key to keep until your uncle returns, I will then give it back to you. As I don't want to see an old classmate disgraced, I will agree to say nothing of this night's work so long as you do not compel me to.'

"Then I heard Mr. Watkins agree to do as Mr. Manning said, and with that I heard them both get up from the floor. They lighted a lamp, and I saw that the books and papers from the safe were scattered all around. Mr. Watkins picked them up, put them back in the safe, locked it, and handed the key to Mr. Manning. Then Mr. Manning started to leave the office, and I slipped out ahead of him so quietly that neither of them suspected I had been there.

"When Mr. Manning came down I gave him the bit of a pass I had written for him. Then he hurried away. An hour or so after that, as I was going home, I saw Mr. Watkins stop at the post-office door as if he were mailing a letter."

All this had been listened to with breathless interest, and when Allen ceased speaking a sound like a great sigh of relief rose from the spectators. They all knew Jacob Allen to be a man of such sterling honesty that "as honest as Jake Allen" had become a saying in the town. He had never been known to tell a lie, and it was not likely that he was telling one now.

Allen's cross-examination was long and severe, but it failed to alter his statements by a single word.

Captain Ellis himself took the stand for the purpose of testifying to the sending back of the safe-key by Myles the moment he heard of the superintendent's return.

Finally a hotel bell-boy testified that, late on the night of Mr. Manning's arrival at the house, Mr. Watkins had sent him to the telegraph office with a short dispatch.

A copy of the message sent to the *Phonograph* accusing Myles of intoxication was read by Captain Ellis, and the operator testified to having sent it late that night and that it was in Watkins' handwriting.

With this the examination of witnesses came to an end, and the counsel for the company rose to make his closing argument. He dwelt at length on Myles' behavior when he first came to the town, claiming that it alone was sufficient to prove him capable of other acts of folly and even crime. He also attacked the character of the chief witness for the defence, Jacob Allen, and said that his late actions now rendered him unworthy of belief even under oath. He trusted that in weighing the value of the testimony given by Mr. Watkins and the person accused of this great crime the jury would consider their respective positions in life. The one, he said, was a gentleman filling a most important position, in which he enjoyed the fullest confidence of his superiors, while the other was but a reporter, whose business was the fabrication of interesting stories. After talking for nearly an hour in this style, and arousing the violent wrath of Billings, the prosecuting lawyer concluded with an expression of confidence that the jury would find a verdict for the plaintiff, and sat down.

Now came the turn of Captain Ellis. In a manly, straightforward address that lasted half an hour he

gave the history of the case, and showed how, by a perfectly natural course of events, an innocent and unsuspecting person had become involved in a tangled web of circumstantial evidence that caused him to be accused of a crime. He pointed out clearly that a desire for revenge and an urgent need of money, together with an offered opportunity for taking it, might readily have led Ben Watkins to rob the safe and then seek to fasten the crime upon another. He told the story of Myles' splendid act in saving from disaster the train with the 50th Regiment on board, and asked the jury if they thought it possible for a person who would commit the one act, to be capable of performing the other. He referred to the remarkable character for honesty and truthfulness that Jacob Allen had borne for years. He answered his opponent's slur upon reporters by speaking of them as gentlemen whose position was as honorable and important as that of any class of men in the world, and he finally ended by saying that he was willing to rest his case with the jury upon the merits of its evidence alone.

The judge summed up the main points of the case in a few brief and clearly worded sentences. Then

he informed the jury that they might retire and consider their verdict.

Without leaving their seats the twelve jurymen, who had watched the case with a deep interest, whispered together for a moment. Then the foreman rose and said:

"May it please the Court, we do not find it necessary to retire, as our minds are already fully made up, and we are unanimously agreed as to the verdict."

A breathless silence reigned over the court-room. Myles felt as though his very heart had ceased its beating, while Ben Watkins' face assumed a deathly pallor.

"Very well, Mr. Foreman," replied the judge, "the Court awaits your verdict."

"It is, 'Not guilty,'" said the foreman, speaking in a loud, clear voice.

At these words the young reporter's overstrained nerves gave way, and burying his face in his arms on the table before him, he gave one great gasping sob of joy.

The next instant Billings grasped his hand, crying out as he shook it:

"IT 'S ALL RIGHT OLD MAN. YOUR SPACE HAS BEEN MEASURED AND THE FULL BILL IS ALLOWED." (*Page* 343.)

"It 's all right, old man. Your space has been measured and the full bill is allowed."

"Silence!" roared the sheriff; "silence in court!"

But for the next minute or two he might as well have commanded the wind to keep silence. The spectators could n't help cheering, and as many of them as could get near him just had to shake hands with Myles Manning.

As soon as a little quiet was restored and he could make himself heard the judge ordered the sheriff to arrest Ben Watkins on the charge of perjury. That officer attempted to obey the order, but it was too late; Ben had disappeared. Taking advantage of the momentary confusion that followed the verdict he had slipped from the court-room. Five minutes later he was on board a fast train westward bound; nor from that day to this has any thing been heard from him directly. He is supposed to be in one of the new mining regions of the far West, but as the railroad company have not seen fit to prefer a charge against him for robbing their safe, nobody has cared to look him up.

As for Myles, the world never seemed so bright and joyous to him as when he stepped from that

court-room honorably acquitted of the dreadful charge that had threatened to cloud his whole life. Accompanied by Billings, Captain Ellis, and Bert Smedley, he walked to the hotel, and almost every person they met on the way stopped to shake hands with him, or greeted him with a bow and a smile.

The good news had already travelled far beyond Mountain Junction. Billings had dispatched two messages from the court-room, one to Mrs. Manning and one to the *Phonograph*. Captain Ellis had sent one to the colonel of the 50th Regiment N. G. S. N. Y., and Bert Smedley had sent one to Mr. Saxon. Answers to these began to arrive soon after the party reached the hotel. The first was,

"We never for a moment doubted result. Come home quickly. "KATE."

From Mr. Haxall came the words:

"The *Phonograph* is proud of its representative, and congratulates itself as heartily as it does you."

A dispatch from the general officers of the A. & B. Railroad contained the words:

"This company would not have brought suit against you had it not felt certain of defeat. Accept heartiest congratulations, and come home with Bert as soon as you reach New York. "WALKER B. SAXON, *President*."

The fourth message to come flying over the wires to Myles was:

"The 50th rejoices over your victory, and is under orders to celebrate—Fizz, Boom, Ti-gah! Signed, Pepper, Colonel, and a thousand other friends."

The fast express of that afternoon bore Myles and his three faithful friends away from the scene of the young reporter's recent trials and triumphs. As it left the Mountain Junction station it was followed by a hearty round of cheers from a crowd of people. They were led by Jacob Allen and little Bob and by Bill Biggs and Tige, the bull-dog.

Billings had seen to it that the *Phonograph* should have a full description of the trial and its glorious ending. When Myles read it the next morning it was with a greater pride than he had taken in that other account of himself published some ten days before, but it was a pride tempered with humility and sincere gratitude.

As the train rolled into the New York station it was greeted by the familiar cheer of the 50th Regiment. There, in full uniform, drawn up in perfect line, was Captain Ellis' company, to whom had been accorded the honor of welcoming home the new

honorary member of the regiment. His name is inscribed upon the roll as "Myles Manning, the hero of Mountain Junction."

Myles, Bert, and Billings, breakfasted with President Saxon of the A. & B. Road. When the first-named of these guests ventured to ask this friend why he had taken such an interest in him and his affairs, the other smilingly answered:

"For Bert's sake, and because he asked me to, in the first place; afterward, because you proved yourself worthy of it. I knew of you through Bert long before you found it necessary to leave college, but when, on the very day that you did leave it, he came to me and asked me to do something for you, I said that I must first know you personally and study your character."

"And to think," said Myles, turning to Bert, "that I should have so misjudged you, and considered you as only a friend in prosperity who would desert a fellow in his time of need!"

"I wish," remarked Billings, plaintively, "that somebody would arrest me, and give me a chance to prove how truly good I am. My failing seems to be that I am beyond all hope of suspicion."

At the *Phonograph* office Myles was received with hearty congratulations.

Of all his triumphs his welcome home was the greatest and best. His mother's happy tears, Kate's proud smiles, and his father's "I am well satisfied with you, my son," were more than worth the trials that had won them.

. . . . . .

All this happened some years ago, and since then time has worked many changes. Van Cleef, for instance, is one of the cleverest and best-informed editorial writers on the *Phonograph*, of which Rolfe is managing editor, and the original and only Billings is the valued Washington correspondent. Myles Manning remained on the paper until he had made an enviable reputation for himself as a space writer and stood at the head of the reporters' list. Then he resigned to accept a fine position as a foreign writer for one of the great illustrated magazines.

His articles appear in the magazine, illustrated by charming sketches signed "K. M."; for his sister Kate travels with him wherever he goes. Every now and then they find time to visit their parents in London, where Mr. Manning, entirely recovered

from his blindness, is the trusted financial agent of the A. & B. Railroad Company of New York.

With all his prosperity, and with all the freedom of action that his magazine allows him, Myles never for a moment forgets that he is still "under orders." He has won a reputation for prompt obedience to them, and his superior officers consider that they cannot praise him more highly than by saying:

"Myles Manning never fails us. He can always be depended upon to carry out our instructions to the very letter."

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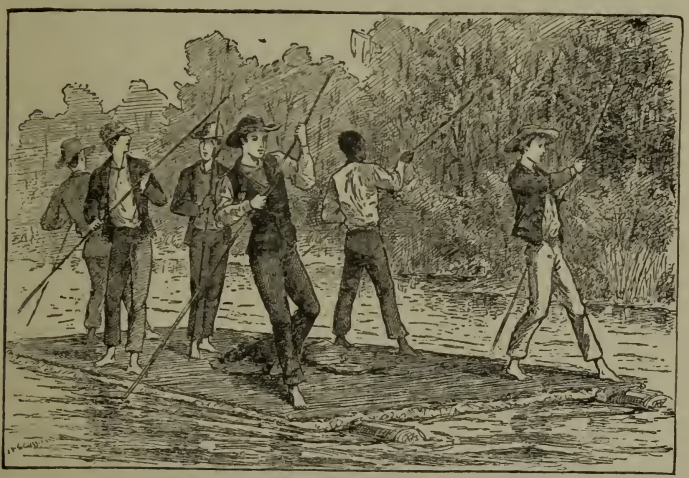

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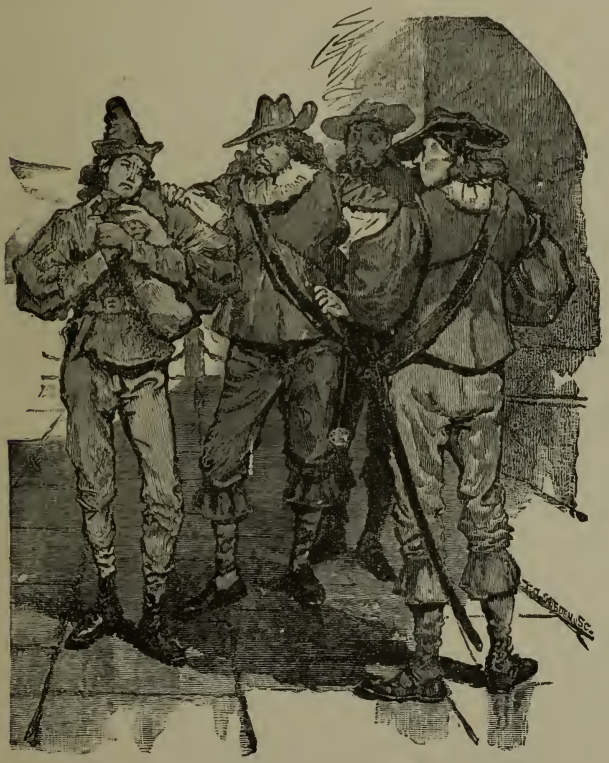

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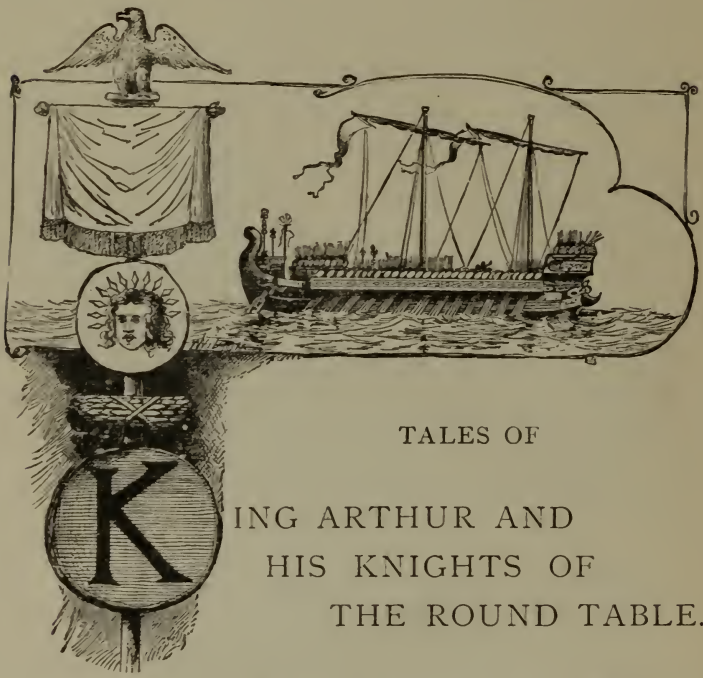

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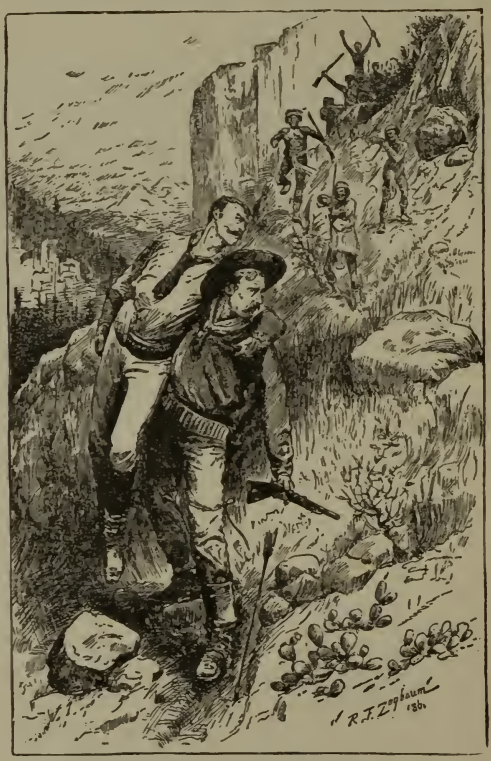

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